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Special Issue

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Embattled Minorities Around the Globe

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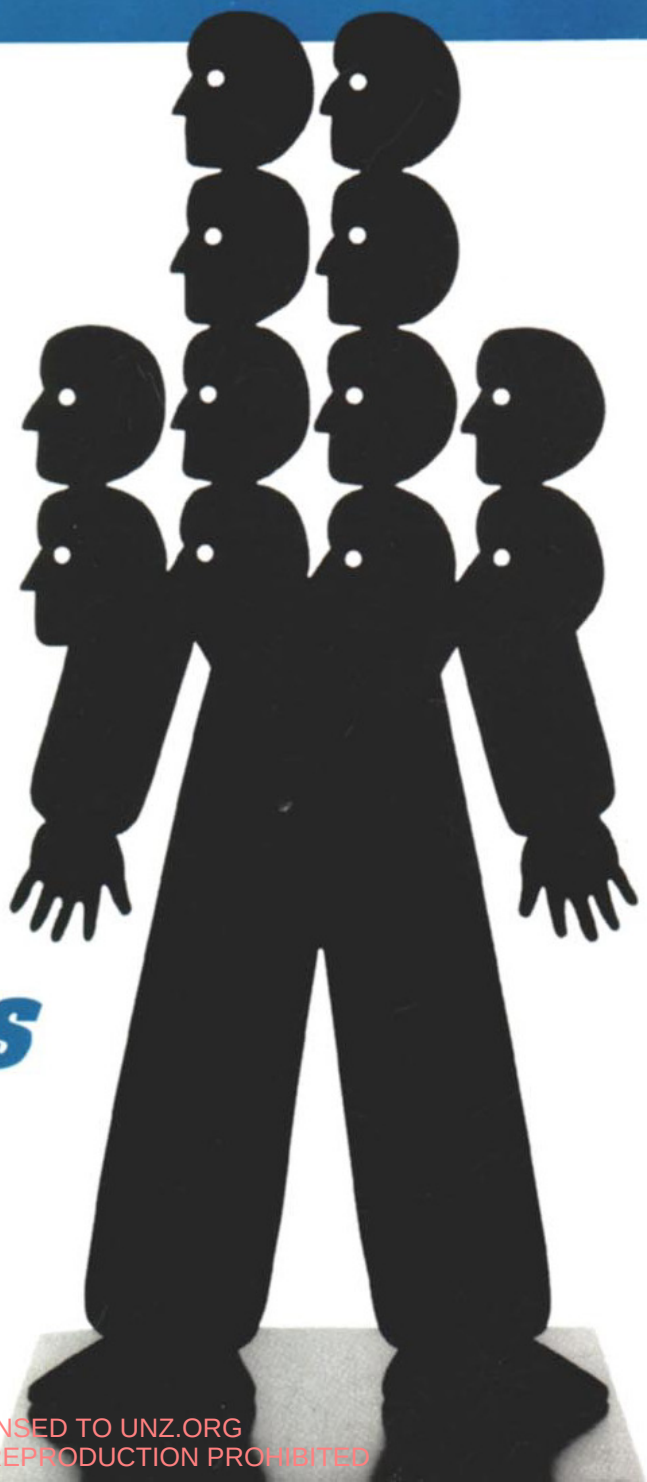

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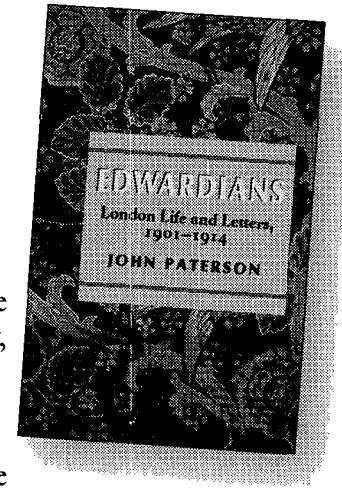
"A delight....Here are the Edwardians in the flesh, with all the enthusiasms and absurdities that flesh is heir to."—Frederick Crews



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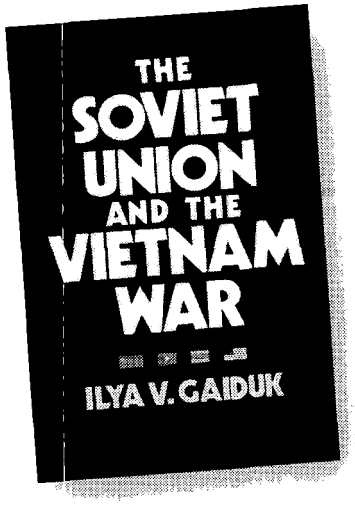

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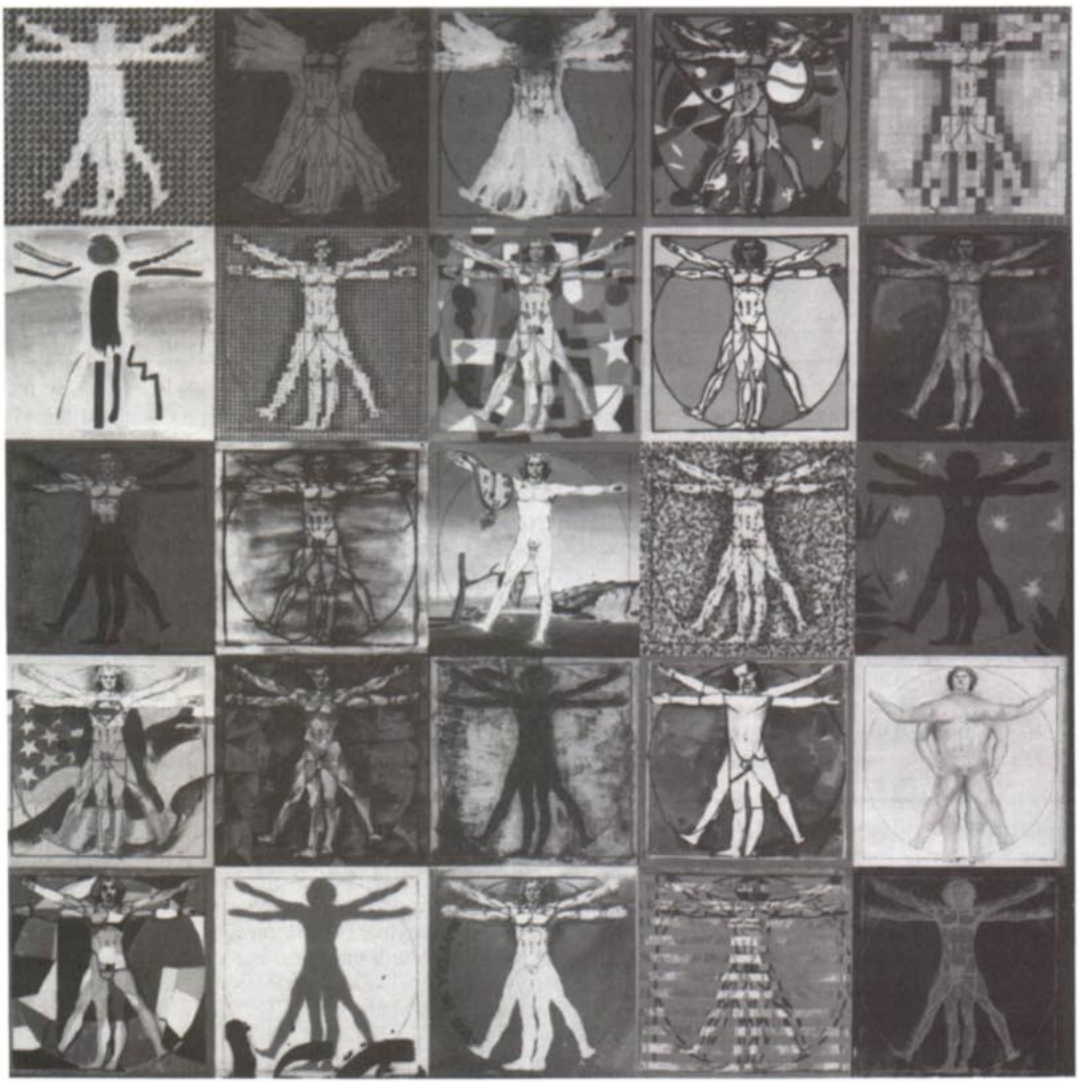

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Special Issue

EMBATTLED MINORITIES AROUND THE GLOBE

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Mitchell Cohen

EMBATTLED MINORITIES

An Introduction

"In the land of nowhere," fantasized Thomas More, "it had been established by King Utopus that it should be lawful for every man to favor and follow what religion he would." It sounds so reasonable five centuries later that one might forget what every commentator reminds us—that there is a word play in the title of More's little book: *eutopia* in ancient Greek means "good place," and thus the good place is nowhere.

Has nowhere been the only good place for minorities? It seems a rhetorical question given all that has happened since 1516, when *Utopia* was written. Indeed, murderous religious wars broke out shortly after he wrote and they consumed Europe for a long time. It was not the era of King Utopus, but of Bishop Bossuet, absolutist defender of Church and Crown, who notified foes (especially France's Protestant minority): "I have the right to persecute you because I am right and you are wrong."

In our contemporary world, Bossuet's justification would be somewhat anachronistic. Not that inquisitorial Believers are gone; enough of them (religious but also political) still grace us. Nor is it a matter of "post-modernity," in which pronouncements about "eternal" verities are suspect. Rather, it is because national and ethnic identities have come to the fore. Sometimes these supplant and sometimes they complement religious differences. They always create new dynamics of Otherness—to which there is little sense saying "You are wrong." Most likely, a nationalist Bossuet would proffer: "I have the right to persecute you because I am this way and you are different."

Since 1989, this sort of political justification has been at a premium. Changing times are inevitably nervous times for minorities. When all the signposts shift (not to mention when societies experience "shock" therapies), majorities become anxious and minorities, not surprisingly, become queasy. Consequences may range from distemper to pogroms. Think of the last years in the ex-USSR and in Eastern Europe, most unhappily, Yugoslavia.

At the same time, a somewhat different "minority problem" has arisen in various Western societies—the challenge of multiculturalism. Migrant populations test past meanings of acculturation, posing new dilemmas of minority rights, pluralism, and tolerance. True, there has been a steep decline in old-style religious persecution, but assaults on Turks in Germany, repressive laws aimed at North Africans in France, not to mention scapegoating of Mexicans and blacks by American politicians, should caution Westerners against too much self-congratulation.

These developments provide the backdrop to this special issue of *Dissent*. It is devoted entirely to the problems of minorities—religious, national, and ethnic—worldwide. In a way, this subject comes naturally to us. Throughout its history, *Dissent* has been preoccupied with those who suffer because of inequalities, who live vulnerable lives due to circumstances not of their making. The democratic left has tended to be particularly attentive to socioeconomic injustices, yet we also know that economics isn't everything. And that, as Jean Jaurès, the great French socialist, said when confederates chastised him for defending a bourgeois captain named Dreyfus: all human rights are the business of the left.

We begin with a group of distinguished

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thinkers and essayists addressing basic questions of minority rights: should there be universal standards for the treatment of minorities? If so, should they be expressed in political as well as cultural institutions? To what extent should local cultures be autonomous? What if a minority demands protection but oppresses its own members? Then, in the second part of the issue, we present reports and meditations on minorities around the globe by writers from more than a dozen countries. The reach goes far, but we have not tried to be encyclopedic. Only so much fits within the covers of a single magazine, so many minorities are inevitably absent. Among them, surely, are stories as compelling as those we present. But we hope to illuminate their situations also, if only by comparison.

Minorities in History

The issue concentrates on the present, even though I began with some historical allusions. There was a point to them: minority problems are not solely a function of the end of the cold war or of multicultural dilemmas, however much these developments throw them into relief. In their different blends of religious, ethnic and national ingredients, they are more often than not both old and new. So some historical orientation is useful. (I focus here on Europe and, to some extent, the Mideast, as I know these regions best).

How shall we understand the genesis of "minority problems" in the West? Five centuries ago, Europe conceived itself as universal Christendom; faith provided a glue for feudalism's decentralized, corporate society. One's place in it depended on one's social estate, although minorities were defined chiefly in relation to the dominant creed. Thus the disabilities of Jews, for instance, could be relieved by conversion, not by becoming, say, Frenchmen. National categories and the idea of equality before the law had, as yet, little meaning. They would come forth as twins; centralizing monarchies and the rising commercial classes were their unknowing midwives. And then those who had been subjects of the crown, bound by social stratum, would become equal citizens composing a nation.

This was a deeply democratic movement, and France is commonly considered its historical archetype; the revolution began when the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly in 1789. But politics doesn't tell the whole story. With these new citizens also came a new *national* "Frenchness," grounded especially in linguistic culture. Linguistic pluralism was a feature of the *ancien régime*, which had defined itself famously by "One faith, one law, one king." According to the sixteenth century jurist Michel de l'Hopital, "Division of religion and laws, not languages, sunders kingdoms." He asserted this in an era of religious persecution, notably of Huguenots—a minority that raised no problem of ethnicity or language, but of "one faith."

When the "rights of man" became the issue in the eighteenth century and "the Republic, One and Universal" became the ideal, political and cultural questions blurred. The Jacobins sought to standardize the national language on the basis of Parisian French; the republic would be assimilated into Frenchness. An advocate of this, B. Barère, captured the mood:

> Feudalism and superstition speak Breton; emigration and hatred of the Republic speak German; the counter-revolution speaks Italian and fanaticism speaks Basque. . . The monarchy had its reasons for being like a Tower of Babel, but in a democracy, leaving citizens ignorant of the national language and incapable of checking those in power is treason to the fatherland (*la patrie*); it is to misunderstand the benefit of the printing press, each printer being an elementary teacher of language and law. . . In a free people, language must be one and the same for all.

The republic decreed that French teachers be sent to every town "where inhabitants normally express themselves in Breton, Italian, Basque and German."[1]

A forceful democratic impulse thus came with a homogenizing drive that easily lent itself to illiberalism. Still, these developments had a liberal axis: the citizen was conceived in individual terms. When it came to minorities, modernity harbored a paradox. Group status in a corporate society had been the basis of premodern discrimination; come modernity, the relevant categories became nation and state on one hand and the individual citizen on the other. Intermediate forms of collective identification

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were suspect. Hence Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre declared in the French National Assembly in 1789, "One must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation but give everything to them as individuals, they must become citizens." He meant to permit this minority entry into the nation, but his formulation disclosed that as one prejudicial burden lifted, a new problem of intolerance was posed.

If we turn here to a different part of the world and consider the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the contemporary Mideast, we find some interesting parallels. The status of minorities under the Ottomans was a function of a corporate structure, the "millet" system fashioned after the capture of Constantinople in 1453. In it, millets (confessional communities) had far-ranging autonomy to run their own internal affairs (e.g. education, social welfare, personal matters such as marriage). The head of each community—for example, the respective patriarchs for the Armenian and Orthodox Christian millets, and the chief rabbi for the Jews—represented it to the Sultan. The latter ruled by religious right, not just as head of the Islamic millet, but as caliph, titular leader of all Islam. While this system sharply distinguished non-Muslims from the *Ummah*, the community of believers, it provided, until its end in the twentieth century, for considerable tolerance. This was in marked contrast to much of Christian Europe's history and it rested on religious sufferance and not any Western concept of rights.

Millet membership was on a personal rather than a territorial basis. So an Armenian was a member of his millet wherever he lived in the empire. Historian Elie Kedourie, discussing Mideast minorities, writes that the religion of early nineteenth-century Armenians "was not only a matter for the individual conscience, for personal and private devotions; it was a rule of life regulating all social activities and all relations with the suzerain power." As the century wore on (and the sultan became increasingly oppressive) Armenians grew increasingly nationalistic. Even had this not happened, however, a clash was probably inevitable. After the revolution of 1908, hopes that the Young Turks, who initially proclaimed French revolutionary ideals, would liberalize the empire dissipated as events took a turn reminiscent of what we saw in France.

The new regime sought to break down barriers between millets, turning members into individual subjects of the empire. However, these subjects were not to be just individuals, but Ottomans, and soon the government aimed at "Turkification." This further alienated the already unhappy Armenians—they would suffer mass murder during World War I—and also the Arabs, among whom nationalist and secessionist sentiments had burgeoned. After the war a new Turkey emerged, inspired by Ataturk's vision of a secular nationalist republic and shed of empire. This still left little place for self-conscious national minorities—one source of Ankara's inability, even today, to recognize Kurds as a distinct ethnic group (calling them, instead, "Mountain Turks").

Social Democratic Alternative

Another minority-filled empire ended with World War I—Austria-Hungary. Since 1989, there has been considerable nostalgia for its polyglot sprawl, especially among intellectuals dismayed by some of the ugly nationalist outbursts that came after communism's fall. The nostalgia, however, rests on a myth: here, once, was a tolerant multicultural realm that, alas, was undone by nationalism. Myths are rarely groundless—just forgetful. Nationalism, some of it quite nasty, did help bring down the Habsburgs. But, as historian Hugh Seton-Watson has written, this was a dynasty "paralyzed by its ignorance and fear of the people whom it ruled. It could only work through the aristocracy and was unable to understand the needs or wishes of the rest of the population." If it could not fend off minority nationalisms this was partly because it had played them off one another rather than truly liberalizing and democratizing itself.

It was Social Democrats—the "Austro-Marxists"—who provided the most innovative approach to "the nationalities problem." Such theorists as Otto Bauer and Karl Renner proposed that the empire become a democratic and socialist federation in which minorities would have "national cultural autonomy" on a "personal"—

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not residential or territorial—basis. Even if individuals didn't live in a compact community with minority compatriots, they would still be joined to them in cultural confederation. Concurrently, everyone would, as democratic citizens, share in the country's politics as a whole.

All this departed significantly from Marxist orthodoxy. The Austro-Marxists accepted the validity of national formations that Marx believed epiphenomena: the capitalist market, according to them, was to homogenize the globe, and the proletarian universal class, also a solvent of particularities, was to rise against it to create an esperanto communism. Marx recognized that socialists had to operate within national contexts, but their cultures had no intrinsic value to him—nor to Kautsky, Luxemburg, or Lenin (who advocated the self-determination of nations, though for instrumental—anti-imperialist—reasons).

Austro-Marxists also forsook the Marxist proposition that the state would "wither away"; instead, they suggested it would endure together with national cultures in classless society. Finally, by defining cultural membership as personal but also endowing this person with democratic citizenship in a general sense, they incorporated an individualist dimension into the scheme. So while it bore similarities to the millet system, their design was also different: in proposing national, not religious, autonomy; by its link to social egalitarianism and political democracy.

It also assumed the survival, albeit in new form, of the empire's reach. That, of course, was not to be. An Austrian republic arose on its ruins. It was now the hour of "self-determination." This was a liberal idea, espoused famously by Woodrow Wilson at the Paris peace conference, but summarized some sixty years before when John Stuart Mill wrote, "One hardly knows what any division of the human race should be free to do if not to determine with which of the various collective bodies of human beings to choose to associate themselves."

Mill believed free government required that nationality and state boundaries be coextensive, a rule that also guided Wilson and his collaborators. But as empires were carved up and previously subject nationalities became independent, a fear arose—for good reasons—that the new states would be as uncharitable to their minorities as their imperial masters had been to them. So recognition by the League of Nations was conditioned on acceptance of treaties aimed to shield minorities.

The use of treaties to protect minorities has a long lineage, going back at least to the Reformation. The emergence then of contesting Christianities posed anew basic questions of tolerance in the West. No longer was it the older medieval problem of adjusting the status of, say, Jews or heretics or homosexuals scattered within Christendom. Now, opposing churches fought bloody wars. When Catholics and Lutherans finally agreed to mutual recognition, practical matters were resolved with a territorial principle: *cuius regio, eius religio* (whoever rules, imposes his religion). Were you in the minority—if the prince's faith wasn't yours—you had the option to leave.

Battered holy warriors thus conceded some license to a religious Other. This was pragmatic tolerance, compelled by circumstances; principled acceptance of internal minorities was yet to come. And in the meantime, not all minorities actually quit dominions dominated by other confessions. So in this or that kingdom one found mixed populations—sometimes scattered, small communities; sometimes communities that were more compact; sometimes minorities lived along borders that marked them off from a neighboring principality of religious compatriots.

In ensuing centuries, similar patterns of majorities and minorities materialized as national states consolidated, adding ethnic or national contours. In the nineteenth century, beginning with the Treaty of Vienna, provisions for national minorities are found increasingly in international accords. Clauses concerning civil and political rights of minorities, not just religious tolerance, also appear in efforts "to extend to Eastern Europe what had become accepted in the West," though they were ineffectually implemented, as Patrick Thornberry, a scholar of international law, notes.

The system of minority treaties fashioned after World War I aimed to be more effective, but in a circumscribed way. The guarantor was

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to be the League of Nations, not the Powers. Wilson wanted the League's Covenant to obligate every signatory—not just new states—"to accord to all racial or national minorities within their several jurisdictions exactly the same treatment and security. . .that is accorded to the racial or national majority." Responding to Australia and New Zealand, who were anxious about ramifications for, respectively, their aboriginal and Maori populations, Britain favored instead a series of separate treaties.

One wonders if Wilson considered fully the implications of a general agreement for blacks and American Indians. In any event, he failed to carry the day. And though his own terminology tended toward collective and not just individual rights, the minority treaties that were adopted did the opposite. They were, as Thornberry summarizes, "not principally group centered, but ascribed rights to individuals: nationals, inhabitants, and persons belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities." In the Polish Minorities Treaty, the prototype for the others, we read, "Polish nationals who belong to racial, religious, or linguistic minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as the other Polish nationals."

The minority treaties, of course, failed, and most observers ascribe this to the same reasons as the League's failure. Only new states were compelled to sign them, and this was resented mightily, especially stipulations subordinating their own laws to the treaties and giving jurisdiction over disputes to the Permanent Court of International Justice. Poland summarily annulled its obligations in 1934. In the meantime, the most ardent petitioners to the Court were minorities with "kin-states" to back them, such as Sudeten Germans and Transylvanian Hungarians. More vulnerable minorities were reticent, for example, Jews, scattered across Europe without a kin-state. Soon enough, the Sudetenland was Hitler's pretext for raping Czechoslovakia; Transylvania was returned to Budapest in reward for backing the Axis; the "Jewish question" was "resolved" by mass murder.

During the carnage, Seton-Watson, an astute observer of Eastern and Central Europe, wrote that "if the Minorities Problem is not faced with realism and courage at the end of this war, it will be an important. . .cause of another European war." There was another war—a cold one, and the status of minorities in the Soviet bloc became a function of it. Minority as well as national sentiments were, depending on the case, manipulated or thwarted, often in the name of "internationalism."

Still, Communist delegates at post-war forums defended minority rights—in principle, anyway. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was debated, Moscow's ambassador called for a specific article on minorities; their rights were "fundamental human rights." Yugoslavia's representative proposed that minority rights were "a condition for the enjoyment of human rights." Belorussia's envoy berated U.S.treatment of American Indians and Australia's of aborigines. None of these emissaries objected to Stalin's savage policies. On the other side of the cold war, Washington's delegate retorted that regard for human rights in general was "the best solution of the problem of minorities." Rights, for the Americans, pertained to individuals, not groups.

Consider the ironies. These exchanges came just after a war in which a minority had been marked out, stalked, and slaughtered like none before. Yet the champions of minority rights included regimes with their own appalling records on rights of any sort. And the United States, whose president, after the previous World War, had backed off from the language of collective minority protections, now framed matters solely as individual human rights—as if Brownshirts had shouted "*Menschen 'raus*" rather than "*Juden 'raus*." In the end, the declaration made no provision for minorities beyond reproving discrimination.[2] Some later international statements do go a little beyond this. The UN's 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that minorities "shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to possess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." The 1975 Helsinki Final Act also addresses minority problems, and the Council of Europe has proposed guidelines for protecting minorities.

But such declarations are famous for being just declarations. During the cold war minorities were pawns in larger strategic games. Nowa-

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days, the bigger powers, perceiving few vital interests to be at stake for them any longer, seldom have the will to protect any besieged populations abroad—though they are sometimes prodded or shamed into doing so, often too late.

Yugoslavia's calamity represents one possible consequence. Our post-cold war world is both new and old and doesn't seem so well equipped to cope with its tempests, either organizationally or intellectually. The UN and regional organizations have proven largely ineffectual. Liberalism (partly) disables itself by its individualist prejudices; communitarianism, on the other hand, could use some prejudices of that sort. Post-modernists, by fetishizing fragmentation and abjuring humanism, forsake the means to contest a nationalist Bossuet; they think with these times while imagining they think against them.

Is there an alternative—a maxim that might be offered by a contemporary King Utopus, or rather Utopus the democratic (preferably social democratic) citizen? A fixed rule to govern all circumstances could, I think, be applied only with considerable difficulties to this diverse world. The needs of a minority in one country might best be secured simply by (effective) equality before the law; another, elsewhere (or even in the same country), might need cultural autonomy; a third, victimized by long-standing discriminatory patterns, might require political prerogatives. In short, various institutional and constitutional arrangements are appropriate to some places and not to others.

But there is, I think, a maxim that Utopus might tender to majorities: "Treat a minority as you would want to be treated were you to find yourself in one." This suggests no necessary political structures or cultural imperialism. It implies only a "regulative idea" (I borrow Kant's term) for varying conditions. Importantly, it places the onus on the majority, the stronger player. But how should one respond to a minority that demands, perhaps rightly, special consideration in a liberal, pluralistic society and, at the same time, refuses pluralism or individuality within its own ranks? What if, for just one example, its religion prescribes second-class status for women? What if its elders, told to treat females as they would want to be treated were they to awake one morning as women, retorted: "We would take the place that tradition assigned to us. Moreover, if you speak to the women in our community, you will find that they concur. So please keep your humanist prejudices to yourself."

This sort of predicament is debated by political philosophers when they address questions of tolerance, and I won't rehearse all the arguments here. Imagine the difficulties in defining, let alone balancing, both minority and individual rights in light of it. But I bring it up also to warn of the danger of reifying "difference" and celebrating it to the exclusion of common humanity. Indeed, only a sense of common humanity would permit us to consider a minority as if we were in its shoes. To accept particularity and appreciate otherness while insisting on universality and solidarity at the same time—this is no easy matter. Yet the effort ought to engage the best of our humanity nowadays; else our worst could own the new millennium.

□

Notes

[1] I draw in the above passages from R. Anthony Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) pp. 210-215. Some translations amended.

[2]See Patrick Thornberry, *International Law and the Rights of Minorities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 132-137. I am greatly indebted to and have drawn considerable material from Thornberry's study. I have also relied on various essays in Jack Crawford, ed., *The Rights of Peoples* (Oxford University Press, 1992) and, for the historical discussion, Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941* (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1967).

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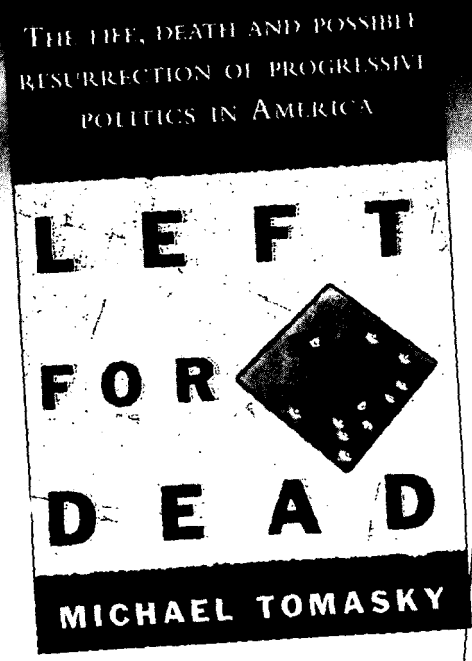

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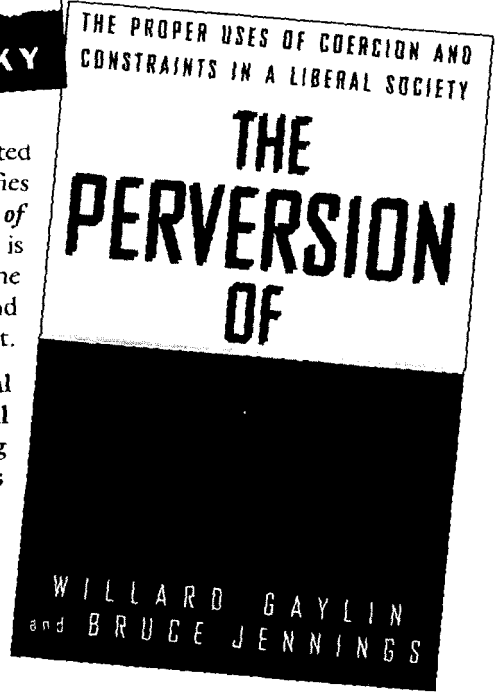

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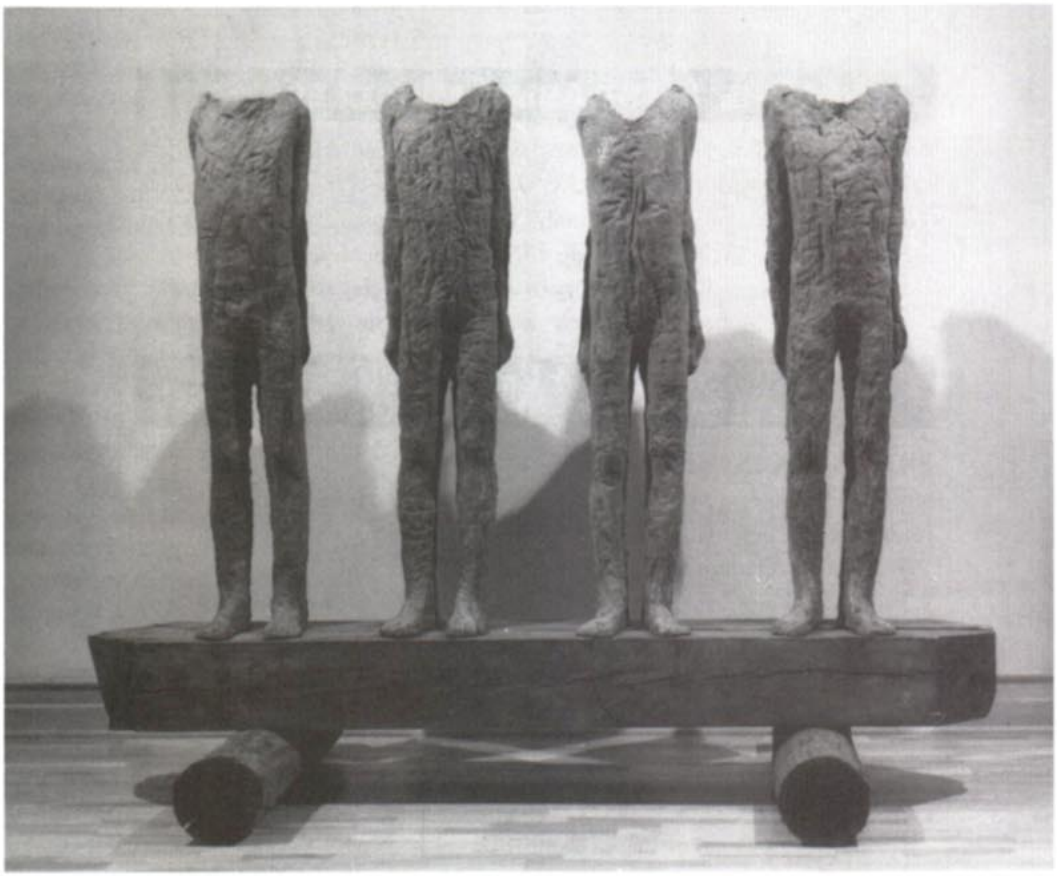

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Part I: Thinking About Minorities

Charles Taylor

A WORLD CONSENSUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS?

What would it mean to come to a genuine, unforced international consensus on human rights? I suppose it would be something like what John Rawls describes in his *Political Liberalism* as an "overlapping consensus." That is, different groups, countries, religious communities, civilizations, while holding incompatible fundamental views on theology, metaphysics, human nature, and so on, would come to an agreement on certain norms that ought to govern human behavior. Each would have its own way of justifying this from out of its profound background conception. We would agree on the norms, while disagreeing on why they were the right norms. And we would be content to live in this consensus, undisturbed by the differences of profound underlying belief.

The idea was already expressed in 1949 by Jacques Maritain: "I am quite certain that my way of justifying belief in the rights of man and the ideal of liberty, equality, fraternity is the only way with a firm foundation in truth. This does not prevent me from being in agreement on these practical convictions with people who are certain that their way of justifying them, entirely different from mine or opposed to mine . . . is equally the only way founded upon truth."

Is this kind of consensus possible? Perhaps because of my optimistic nature, I believe that it is. But we have to confess at the outset that it is not entirely clear around what the consensus would form, and we are only beginning to discern the obstacles we would have to overcome on the way there. I want to talk a little about both these issues here.

First, what would the consensus be on? One might have thought this was obvious: on human rights. That's what our original question was about. But right away there is a first obstacle. Rights talk has roots in Western culture. This is not to say that something very like the underlying norms expressed in schedules of rights don't turn up elsewhere. But they are not expressed in this language. We can't assume straight off, without further examination, that a future unforced world consensus could be formulated to the satisfaction of everyone in the language of rights. Maybe yes, maybe no. Or maybe: partially yes, partially no, as we come to distinguish some of the things that have been associated in the Western package.

This is not to say that we already have some adequate term for whatever universals we may discern among different cultures. Jack Donnelly speaks of "human dignity" as a universal value. Yasuaki Onuma criticizes this term, pointing out that "dignity" has been a favorite term in the same Western philosophical stream that has elaborated human rights. He prefers to speak of the "pursuit of spiritual as well as material well-being" as the universal. Where "dignity" might be too precise and culture-bound a term, "well-being" might be too vague and general. Perhaps we are incapable at this stage of formulating the universal values in play here. Perhaps we shall always be incapable of this. This wouldn't matter, because what we need to formulate for an overlapping consensus is certain norms of conduct. And there does seem to be some basis for hoping that we can achieve at least some agreement on these norms. One can presumably find in all cultures condemnations of genocide, murder, torture, and slavery, as well as of, say, "disappearances" and the shooting of innocent dem-

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onstrators. The deep underlying values supporting these common conclusions will, in the nature of the case, belong to the alternative, mutually incompatible justifications.

I have been distinguishing between norms of conduct and their underlying justification. The Western rights tradition in fact exists at both these levels. On one plane, it is a legal tradition, legitimating certain kinds of legal moves, and empowering certain kinds of people to make them. We could, and people sometimes do, consider this legal culture as the proper candidate for universalization, arguing that its adoption can be justified in more than one way. Then a legal culture entrenching rights would define the norms around which the world consensus would supposedly crystallize.

Now some people have trouble with this; for example, Lee Kwan Yew and those in East Asia who sympathize with him. They see something dangerously individualistic, fragmenting, dissolvent of community, in this Western legal culture. (Of course, they have particularly in mind—or in their sights—the United States.) But in their criticism of Western procedures, they also seem to be attacking the underlying philosophy of the West, which allegedly gives primacy to the individual, where supposedly a "Confucian" outlook would have a larger place for the community and the complex web of human relations in which each person stands.

For the Western rights tradition also carries certain views on human nature, society, and the human good that are elements of an underlying justification. It might help the discussion to distinguish these two levels, at least analytically, so that we can develop a more fine-grained picture of what our options are here. Perhaps, in fact, the legal culture could "travel" better if it could be separated from some of its underlying justifications. Or perhaps the reverse is true, that the underlying picture of human life might look less frightening if it could find expression in a different legal culture. Or maybe neither of these simple solutions will work (this is my hunch), but modifications need to be made in both; however, distinguishing the levels still helps, because the modifications are different on each level.

A good place to start the discussion would be to give a rapid portrait of the language of rights that has developed in the West and of the surrounding notions of human agency and the good. We could then proceed to identify certain centers of disagreement across cultures, and we might then see what, if anything, could be done to bridge these differences.

First, let's get at the peculiarities of the language of rights. As has often been pointed out, there is something rather special here. Many societies have held that it is good to ensure certain immunities or liberties to their members—or sometimes even to outsiders (think of the stringent laws of hospitality in many traditional cultures). Everywhere it is wrong to take human life, at least under certain circumstances and for certain categories of persons. Wrong is the opposite of right, and so this is in some sense in play here.

But a quite different sense of the word is invoked when we start to use the definite or indefinite articles or to put it in the plural and speak of "a right" or "rights" or when we start to attribute these to persons and speak of your rights or my rights. This is to introduce what has been called "subjective rights." Instead of saying that it is wrong to kill me, we begin to say that I have a right to life. The two formulations are not equivalent in all respects, because in the latter case the immunity or liberty is considered the property of someone. It is no longer just an element of the law that stands over and between all of us equally. That I have a right to life says more than that you shouldn't kill me. It gives me some control over this immunity. A right is something that in principle I can waive. It is also something I have a role in enforcing.

Some element of subjective right may exist in all legal systems. The peculiarity of the West was, first, that this idea played a bigger role in European medieval societies than elsewhere in history and, second, that it was the basis for the rewriting of Natural Law theory that marked the seventeenth century. The older notion that human society stands under a Law of Nature, whose origin was the Creator, and which was thus beyond human will, was now transposed. The fundamental law was reconceived as consisting of natural rights, attributed to individuals prior to society. At the origin of society stands a con-

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tract, which takes people out of a state of nature and puts them under political authority as a result of an act of consent on their part.

So subjective rights are not only crucial to the Western tradition; even more significant is the fact that they were projected onto Nature and formed the basis of a philosophical view of humans and their society, one that greatly privileges individuals' freedom and their right to consent to the arrangements under which they live. This view has been an important strand in Western democratic theory of the last three centuries.

We can see how the notion of (subjective) right both serves to define certain legal powers and also provides the master image for a philosophy of human nature, of individuals and their societies. It operates both as legal norm and as underlying justification.

Moreover, these two levels are not unconnected. The force of the underlying philosophy has brought about a steady promotion of the legal norm in our politico-legal systems; so that it now occupies pride of place in a number of contemporary polities. Charters of rights are now entrenched in the constitutions of several countries and also of the European Union. These are the basis of judicial review, whereby the ordinary legislation of different levels of government can be invalidated on the grounds of conflict with fundamental rights.

So the modern Western discourse of rights involves, on one hand, a set of legal forms, by which immunities and liberties are inscribed as rights, with certain consequences for the possibility of waiver and for the ways in which they can be secured—whether these immunities and liberties are among those from time to time granted by duly constituted authority or among those that are entrenched in fundamental law.

And it involves, on the other hand, a philosophy of the person and of society, attributing great importance to the individual and making significant matters turn on his or her power of consent. In both these regards, it contrasts with many other cultures, including the pre-modern West: not that some of the same protections and immunities may not have been present, but in that they had a quite different basis.

When people protest against the Western rights model, they seem to have this whole package in mind. And we can therefore see how resistance to the Western discourse of rights might occur on more than one level. Some governments might resist the enforcement of widely accepted norms because they have an agenda that involves their violation (for example, the contemporary People's Republic of China). Others, however, are certainly ready, even eager, to espouse some universal norms, but they are made uneasy by the underlying philosophy of the human person in society. This seems to give pride of place to autonomous individuals, determined to demand their rights, even (indeed especially) in the face of widespread social consensus. How does this fit with the Confucian emphasis on close personal relationships, not only as highly valued in themselves but as a model for the wider society? Can people who imbibe the full Western human rights ethos, which (on one version anyway) reaches its highest expression in the lone courageous individual fighting against all the forces of social conformity for his rights, ever be good members of a "Confucian" society? And how does this ethic of demanding what is due to us fit with the Theravada Buddhist search for selflessness, for self-giving, and *dana* (generosity)?

Taking the rights package as a whole is not simply wrong, because the philosophy is plainly part of what has motivated the great promotion enjoyed by this legal form. But the misgivings expressed in the previous paragraph, which cannot be easily dismissed, show the potential advantages of distinguishing the elements and loosening the connection between the legal cultures of rights enforcement and the philosophical conceptions of human life by which they were originally nourished at their point of origin.

In fact, we can easily imagine situations in which, for all its interconnections, the package can be untied, and either the forms or the philosophy could be adopted alone, without the other. Of course, this might involve some adjustments in what was borrowed, but this inevitably happens whenever ideas and institutions developed in one area are taken up elsewhere.

It might help to structure our thinking if we made a tripartite distinction. What we are looking for, in the end, is a world consensus on cer-

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tain norms of conduct, enforceable on governments. To be accepted in any given society, these would in each case have to repose on some widely acknowledged philosophical justification; and to be enforced in fact, they would have to find expression in legal mechanisms. One way of putting our central question might be this: what variations can we imagine in philosophical justifications or in legal forms that would still be compatible with a meaningful universal consensus on what really matters to us, the enforceable norms?

Following this line of thinking, it might help to understand a little better what exactly we want to converge onto in the world society of the future, as well as to measure our chances of getting there, if we imagine variations separately on the two levels.

This is a big agenda, and I don't propose to follow it out here in all its ramifications. I will just consider one example, a case where we can see an important difference with the Western philosophy of the human person. This will allow us to raise the issue of to what extent we could hope for a convergence on norms even with very different underlying justifications.

I'd like to recur to the Theravada Buddhist demurral before the anthropology of the rights-demanding individual, which I invoked earlier; and in particular, I want to look at the way this position has been articulated by an influential movement in Thailand. This society has seen in the last century a number of attempts to formulate reformed interpretations of the overwhelmingly majority religion. Some of these have attempted to find a basis in this Buddhism for democracy and human rights.

One main stream of reform consists of movements that (as they see it) attempt to purify Buddhism, to turn it away from a focus on ritual, on gaining merit, and even worldly success through blessings and acts of piety, and to focus more on what they see as the original goal of Enlightenment. The late Phutthathat (Buddhadasa) was a major figure in this regard. This stream tries to return to what it sees as the original core of Buddhist teaching, about the unavoidability of suffering, the illusion of the self, and the goal of Nirvana. It attacks what it sees as the "superstition" of those who seek potent amulets, the blessings of monks, and the like. It wants to separate the search for enlightenment from the seeking of merit through ritual. And it is very critical of the whole metaphysical structure of belief that has developed in mainstream Buddhism, about heaven, hell, gods, and demons, which play a large part in popular belief. It has been described by Sri Lankan anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere as a "Protestant Buddhism."

It is this stream that seems to be producing new reflections on Buddhism as a basis for democratic society and practice. This is not to say that all of those concerned Buddhists, monks and lay, involved in democratic activism of one kind or another have been of this persuasion. But it is the reform stream that is concerned to develop a Buddhist vision of democratic society. One may see something paradoxical in this, in that this rather austere reformism is espoused by a relatively small elite, rather far removed from the religious outlook of the mass of the people. But the dedication of some members of this elite to democracy, equality, and human rights commands respect.

Phutthathat's reformism was the very opposite of a disengaged religion, unconcerned with the world. On the contrary, he and those inspired by him have always stressed that the path to enlightenment is inseparable from that of concern for all creatures: *metta* (loving kindness) and *karuna* (compassion). We can't really be concerned with our own liberation without also seeking that of others, just as any acts of injustice toward them redound to our own continued imprisonment in illusion. Saneh Chamarik quotes the Buddha: "Monks: Taking care of oneself means as well taking care of others. Taking care of others means as well taking care of oneself." This view leads to an activist concern for social justice and well-being. Phutthathat spoke of a "dhammic socialism." It is a spiritual stance that entails heightened standards of personal commitment and responsibility, of probity and dedication to duty, even of self-sacrifice and dedication to the poor and downtrodden. Following Obeyesekere's analogy, one would say that it is reminiscent in this respect of Max Weber's "asceticism" that led to responsible, disciplined social action.

But this concern is not necessarily demo-

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cratic. It could also find expression in other modes of social action, including those that see the agency of reform as a minority with the right intentions. These modes are, after all, well rooted in Theravada Buddhist history, in particular in the paradigm model of the emperor Asoka as the ideally just ruler and upholder of *Dharma*. This is, indeed, one of the models on which the Thai monarchial state was based. The *dhammaraja* is undoubtedly understood as an agency for good, for the welfare of the people, but he is not in any normal sense a democratic agency.

Phutthathat himself was not entirely clear on the issue of democratic agency. There has, however, been a democratic strand in this general movement. Panyanantha made a democratic application of Phutthathat's thought, for instance. And something similar could be said for Photirak and his Santi Asok movement. This has acquired additional political relevance recently, in that the charismatic leader of the Palang Dharma Party, Chamlong Srimuang, is a follower of Santi Asok.

Beyond these, there are followers of Phutthathat's reformism who are deeply committed to democracy, such as Sulak Sivaraksa and Saneh Charmarik. They and others in their milieu are highly active in the nongovernnmental organization (NGO) community. They are concerned with alternative models of development, which would be more ecologically sound, concerned to put limits to growth, critical of "consumerism," and conducive to social equality. The Buddhist commitment lies behind all these goals. As Sulak explains it, the Buddhist commitment to nonviolence entails a nonpredatory stance toward the environment and calls also for the limitation of greed, one of the sources of anger and conflict.

We can see here an agenda of universal well-being. But what specifically pushes to democracy, that is, to ensuring that people take charge of their own lives, rather than simply being the beneficiaries of benevolent rule? Two things seem to come together in this outlook to underpin a strong democratic commitment. The first is the notion, central to Buddhism, that ultimately each individual must take responsibility for his or her own Enlightenment. The second is a new application of the doctrine of nonviolence, which is now seen to call for a respect for the autonomy of each person, demanding in effect a minimal use of coercion in human affairs. This carries us far from the politics of imposed order, decreed by the wise minority, which has long been the traditional background to various forms and phases of military rule. It is also evident that this underpinning for democracy offers a strong support for human rights legislation. And that, indeed, is how it is understood by thinkers like Sulak.

There is an outlook here that converges on a policy of defense of human rights and democratic development, but that is rather different from the standard Western justifications of these. It isn't grounded on a doctrine of the dignity of human beings as something commanding respect. The injunction to respect comes rather as a consequence of the fundamental value of nonviolence, which also generates a whole host of other consequences (including the requirement for an ecologically responsible development and the need to set limits to growth). Human rights don't stand out, as they often do in the West, as a claim that is independent from the rest of our moral commitments or even sometimes in potential conflict with them.

Interestingly, this Buddhist conception provides an alternative way of linking together the agenda of human rights and that of democratic development. Whereas in the Western framework these go together because they are both seen as requirements of human dignity, and indeed, as two facets of liberty, a connection of a somewhat different kind is visible among Thai Buddhists of this reform persuasion. Their commitment to people-centered and ecologically sensitive development makes them strong allies of those communities of villagers who are resisting encroachment by the state and big business and fighting to defend their lands and forests. This means they are heavily engaged with a crucial part of the agenda of democratization in Thailand—decentralization, and in particular the recovery of local control over natural resources. They form a significant part of the NGO community committed to this agenda. Thus, a rather different route than that taken in the West has been traveled to a similar goal.

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Other differences stand out. Because of its roots in a certain justice agenda, the politics of establishing rights in the West has often been surrounded by anger, indignation, and the imperative to punish historic wrongdoing. But from this Buddhist perspective comes a caution against the politics of anger, itself the potential source of new forms of violence.

My aim here is not to judge between these approaches, but to point out these differences as the source of a potentially fruitful exchange within a (one hopes) emerging world consensus on the practice of human rights and democracy. We can in fact see a convergence here on certain norms of action, however they may be entrenched in law. But what is unfamiliar to the Western observer is the entire philosophical basis, and its appropriate reference points, as well as the rhetorical bases of its appeal. In the West, both democracy and human rights have been furthered by the steady advance of a kind of humanism that stressed how humans stood out from the rest of the cosmos and had a higher status and dignity than anything else. This has its origins in Christianity, and also certain strands of ancient thought, but the distance is greatly exacerbated by what Weber describes as the disenchantment of the world, the rejection of a view of the cosmos as a meaningful order. The human agent stands out even more starkly from the mechanistic universe. For Pascal, the human being is a mere reed, but of incomparably greater significance than what threatens to crush it, because it is a thinking reed. Kant echoes some of the same reflections in his discussion of the sublime.

The human rights doctrine based on this humanism stresses the importance of the human agent. It centers everything on him or her, makes his or her freedom and self-control a major value, something to be maximized. Consequently, in the Western mind, the defense of human rights seems indissolubly linked with this exaltation of human agency. It is because humans justifiably command all this respect and attention, at least in comparison to anything else, that their rights must be defended. The Buddhist philosophy that I have been describing starts from a quite different place, the demand of *ahimsa*, and yet seems to ground many of these same norms. (Of course, there will also be differences in the norms grounded, which raises its own problems, but for the moment I just want to note the substantial overlap.) The gamut of Western philosophical emotions, the exaltation of human dignity, the emphasis on freedom as the highest value, the drama of age-old wrongs righted in valor, all the things that move us in seeing *Fidelio* well performed, seem out of place in this alternative setting. And so do the models of heroism. The heroes of *ahimsa* are not forceful revolutionaries, not Cola di Rienzi or Garibaldi. And without the philosophy and the models, a whole rhetoric loses its basis.

This perhaps gives us an idea of what an unforced world consensus on human rights might look like. Agreement on norms, yes; but a profound sense of difference, of unfamiliarity, in the ideals, the notions of human excellence, the rhetorical tropes and reference points by which these norms become objects of deep agreement for us. To the extent that we can only acknowledge agreement with people who share the whole package, and are moved by the same heroes, the consensus will either never come or must be forced.

This is the situation at the outset, in any case, where consensus on some aspect of human rights has just been attained. Later, a process of mutual learning can follow, moving toward a "fusion of horizons" in Gadamer's term, where the moral universe of the other becomes less strange. And out of this will come further borrowings and the creation of new hybrid forms.

After all, something of this has already occurred with another stream of the philosophy of *ahimsa*, that of Gandhi. Gandhi's practices of nonviolent resistance have been borrowed and adapted in the West, in the American civil rights movement, for example. And beyond that, they have become part of a world repertory of political practices, invoked in Manila in 1986 and in Prague in 1989, to name just two examples.

Also worthy of remark is one other facet of this case, which may be generalizable as well. An important part of the Western consciousness of human rights lies in the awareness of a historic achievement. The rights define norms of respect for human beings more radical and more

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exigent than have ever existed in the past. They offer in principle greater freedom, greater security from violence, from arbitrary treatment, from discrimination and oppression than humans have enjoyed at least in most major civilizations in history. In a sense they involve taking the rather exceptional treatment accorded to privileged people in the past and extending it to everyone. That is why so many of the landmarks of the historical development of rights were in their day instruments of elite privilege, starting with the Magna Carta.

Now there is a curious convergence in this respect with the strand of Reform Buddhism I have been describing. Here, too, there is the awareness that very exigent demands are being made, which go way beyond what the majority of ordinary believers recognize as required practices. Reform Buddhism is practiced by an elite, as has been the case with most of its analogues in history. But here, too, in developing a doctrine of democracy and human rights, Reform Buddhists are proposing to extend what has hitherto been a minority practice and entrench it in society universally. Here again there is a consciousness of the universalization of the highest of traditional minority practices.

It's as though, in spite of the difference in philosophy, this universalization of an exigent standard, which human rights practice at its best involves, was recognized as a valid move, and recreated within a different cultural, philosophical, and religious world. The hope for a world consensus is that this kind of move will be made repeatedly.

Can it be? Will it be? It's too early to say; but perhaps we already dimly discern the direction in which we have to travel. □

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THE EDITORS □

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Will Kymlicka

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE INTOLERABLE

Minority Group Rights

Ethnocultural minorities around the world are demanding various forms of recognition and protection, often in the language of "group rights." Many commentators see this as a new and dangerous trend that threatens the fragile international consensus on the importance of individual rights. Traditional human rights doctrines are based on the idea of the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals. The emphasis on group rights, by contrast, seems to treat individuals as the mere carriers of group identities and objectives, rather than as autonomous personalities capable of defining their own identity and goals in life. Hence it tends to subordinate the individual's freedom to the group's claim to protect its historical traditions or cultural purity.

I believe that this view is overstated. In many cases, group rights supplement and strengthen human rights, by responding to potential injustices that traditional rights doctrine cannot address. These are the "good" group rights. There are cases, to be sure, where illiberal groups seek the right to restrict the basic liberties of their members. These are the "bad" group rights. In some cases, these illiberal practices are not only bad, but intolerable, and the larger society has a right to intervene to stop them. But in other cases, liberal states must tolerate unjust practices within a minority group. Drawing the line between the bad and the intolerable is one of the thorniest issues liberal democracies face.

I want to look at the relationship between group and individual rights in the context of the claims of indigenous peoples in North America. In both the United States and Canada, these peoples have various group rights. For example, they have rights of self-government, under which they exercise control over health, education, family law, policing, criminal justice, and resource development. They also have legally recognized land claims, which reserve certain lands for their exclusive use and provide guaranteed representation on certain regulatory bodies. And in some cases, they have rights relating to the use of their own language.

The situation of indigenous peoples is a useful example, I think, for several reasons. For one thing, they have been at the forefront of the movement toward recognizing group rights at the international level—reflected in the Draft Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights at the United Nations. The case of indigenous peoples also shows that group rights are not a new issue. From the very beginning of European colonization, the "natives" fought for rights relating to their land, languages, and self-government. What has changed in recent years is not that indigenous peoples have altered their demands, but rather that these demands have become more visible, and that the larger society has started to listen to them.

Reflecting on this long history should warn us against the facile assumption that the demand for group rights is somehow a byproduct of current intellectual fashions, such as postmodernism, or of ethnic entrepreneurs pushing affirmative action programs beyond their original intention. On the contrary, the consistent historical demands of indigenous peoples suggests that the issue of group rights is an enduring and endemic one for liberal democracies.

Group rights, as I will use the term, refer to claims to something more than, or other than,

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the common rights of citizenship. The category is obviously very large and can be subdivided into any number of more refined categories, reflecting the different sorts of rights sought by different sorts of groups.

Two Kinds of Group Rights

For my purposes, however, the most important distinction is between two kinds of group rights: one involves the claim of an indigenous group against its own members; the other involves the claim of an indigenous group against the larger society. Both of these can be seen as protecting the stability of indigenous communities, but they respond to different sources of instability. The first is intended to protect a group from the destabilizing impact of internal dissent (that is, the decision of individual members not to follow traditional practices or customs), whereas the second is intended to protect the group from the impact of external decisions (that is, the economic or political policies of the larger society). I will call the first "internal restrictions" and the second "external protections."

Both are "group rights," but they raise very different issues. Internal restrictions involve intra-group relations. An indigenous group may seek the use of state power to restrict the liberty of its own members in the name of group solidarity. For example, a tribal government might discriminate against those members who do not share the traditional religion. This sort of internal restriction raises the danger of individual oppression. Group rights in this sense can be invoked by patriarchal and theocratic cultures to justify the oppression of women and the legal enforcement of religious orthodoxy.

Of course, all forms of government involve restricting the liberty of those subject to their authority. In all countries, no matter how liberal and democratic, people are required to pay taxes to support public goods. Most democracies also require people to undertake jury duty or to perform some amount of military or community service, and a few countries require people to vote. All governments expect and sometimes require a minimal level of civic responsibility and participation from their citizens.

But some groups seek to impose much greater restrictions on the liberty of their members. It is one thing to require people to do jury duty or to vote, and quite another to compel people to attend a particular church or to follow traditional gender roles. The former are intended to uphold liberal rights and democratic institutions, the latter restrict these rights in the name of orthodoxy or cultural tradition. It is these latter cases that I have in mind when talking about internal restrictions.

Obviously, groups are free to require respect for traditional norms and authorities as terms of membership in private, voluntary associations. A Catholic organization can insist that its members be Catholics in good standing, and the same applies to voluntary religious organizations within indigenous communities. The problem arises when a group seeks to use *governmental* power, or the distribution of public benefits, to restrict the liberty of members.

On my view, such legally imposed internal restrictions are almost always unjust. It is a basic tenet of liberal democracy that whoever exercises political power within a community must respect the civil and political rights of its members, and any attempt to impose internal restrictions that violate this condition is unjust.

External protections, by contrast, involve *inter*-group relations. In these cases, the indigenous group seeks to protect its distinct existence and identity by limiting its vulnerability to the decisions of the larger society. For example, reserving land for the exclusive use of indigenous peoples ensures that they are not outbid for this resource by the greater wealth of outsiders. Similarly, guaranteeing representation for indigenous peoples on various public regulatory bodies reduces the chance that they will be outvoted on decisions that affect their community. And allowing indigenous peoples to control their own health care system ensures that critical decisions are not made by people who are ignorant of their distinctive health needs or their traditional medicines.

On my view, these sorts of external protections are often consistent with liberal democracy, and may indeed be necessary for democratic justice. They can be seen as putting indigenous

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peoples and the larger society on a more equal footing, by reducing the extent to which the former is vulnerable to the latter.

Of course, one can imagine circumstances where the sorts of external protections demanded by a minority group are unfair. Under the apartheid system in South Africa, for example, whites, who constituted less than 20 percent of the population, demanded 87 percent of the land mass of the country, monopolized all the political power, and imposed Afrikaans and English throughout the entire school system. They defended this in the name of reducing their vulnerability to the decisions of other larger groups, although the real aim was to dominate and exploit these groups.

However, the sorts of external protections sought by indigenous peoples hardly put them in a position to dominate others. The land claims, representation rights, and self-government powers sought by indigenous peoples do not deprive other groups of their fair share of economic resources or political power, nor of their language rights. Rather, indigenous peoples simply seek to ensure that the majority cannot use its superior numbers or wealth to deprive them of the resources and institutions vital to the reproduction of their communities. And that, I believe, is fully justified. So, whereas internal restrictions are almost inherently in conflict with liberal democratic norms, external protections are not—so long as they promote equality between groups rather than allowing one group to oppress another.

The Group Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Which sorts of claims are indigenous peoples making? This is not always an easy question to answer. Self-government rights can be used either to secure external protections or to impose internal restrictions, and some indigenous groups use these rights in both ways.

But most indigenous peoples seek group rights primarily for the external protections they afford. Most groups are concerned with ensuring that the larger society does not deprive them of the resources and institutions necessary for their survival, not with controlling the extent to which their own members engage in untraditional or unorthodox practices. Under these circumstances, there is no conflict between external protections and individual rights. Groups that have these external protections may fully respect the civil and political rights of their own members. Indeed, many indigenous groups have adopted their own internal constitutional bills of rights, guaranteeing freedom of religion, speech, press, conscience, association, and a speedy and public trial.

In these cases, group rights supplement, even strengthen, standard human rights. Far from limiting the basic civil and political rights of individual Indians, they help to protect the context within which those rights have their meaning and efficacy. The long history of European-indigenous relations suggests that even if indigenous peoples have citizenship rights in the mainstream society, they tend to be politically impotent and culturally marginalized.

Some readers might think that I am underestimating the illiberal tendencies of indigenous groups. I have argued that many Indian communities are committed to respecting the rights of their individual members. Why then are most indigenous peoples in the United States opposed to the idea that their internal decisions should be subject to judicial review under the U.S. Bill of Rights?

This is an important question, which goes to the heart of the relationship between group and individual rights, and which is worth exploring in some depth. As part of their self-government, tribal councils in the United States have historically been exempted from the constitutional requirement to respect the Bill of Rights. Various efforts have been made by federal legislators to change this, most recently the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act. According to this act, which was passed by Congress despite vociferous opposition from most Indian groups, tribal governments are now required to respect most (but not all) constitutional rights. However, there are still limits on judicial review of the actions of tribal councils. If a member of an Indian tribe feels that her rights have been violated by her tribal council, she can seek redress in a tribal court, but she cannot (except under exceptional circumstances) seek redress from the Supreme Court.

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Indian groups remain strongly opposed to the 1968 Act, and would almost certainly resist any attempt to extend the jurisdiction of federal courts over Indian governments. Similarly, Indian bands in Canada have argued that their self-governing councils should not be subject to judicial review under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They do not want their members to be able to challenge band decisions in the courts of the mainstream society.

These limits on the application of constitutional bills of rights suggest that individuals or subgroups within Indian communities could be oppressed in the name of group solidarity or cultural purity. For example, concern has been expressed that Indian women in the United States and Canada might be discriminated against under certain systems of self-government, if these communities are exempt from the constitutional requirement of sexual equality. Demanding exemption from judicial review in the name of self government, for many people, is a smokescreen behind which illiberal groups hide their oppressive practices.

Before jumping to this conclusion, however, we should consider the reasons why groups that believe in individual rights would nonetheless be distrustful of judicial review. In the case of indigenous peoples, these reasons are, I think, painfully obvious. After all, the federal courts have historically accepted and legitimated the colonization and dispossession of Indian peoples and lands. Why should Indians trust the federal courts to act impartially now?

But there are other, more specific concerns. Many Indians argue that their self-government needs to be exempt from the Bill of Rights, not in order to restrict the liberty of women or religious dissidents, but to defend the external protections of Indians vis-à-vis the larger society. Their special rights to land, or to hunting, or to group representation, which reduce their vulnerability to external economic and political decisions, could be struck down as discriminatory under the Bill of Rights. Such protections do not, in my view, violate equality. On the contrary, a powerful case could be made that they promote equality, by protecting Indians from unjust majority decisions. But Indians rightly worry that the Supreme Court could take a different and more formalistic view of equality rights.

Indian leaders also fear that white judges might interpret certain rights in culturally biased ways. For example, traditional Indian forms of consensual political decision making could be seen as denying democratic rights. These traditional procedures do not violate the underlying democratic principle of the Constitution—namely, that legitimate authority requires the consent of the governed, subject to periodic review. However, they do not use the particular method for securing consent envisioned by the Constitution—namely, periodic election of representatives. Rather, they rely on time-honored procedures for ensuring consensual decision making. Indian leaders worry that white judges will impose their own culturally specific form of democracy, without considering whether traditional Indian practices are an equally valid interpretation of democratic principles.

It is often difficult for outsiders to assess the likelihood that self-government for an indigenous minority will lead to the suppression of basic individual rights. The identification of oppression requires sensitivity to the specific context, particularly when dealing with other cultures, and so it is not surprising that Indians would want these questions settled in a forum where judges are familiar with the situation.

Hence many Indian leaders seek exemption from the Bill of Rights, but at the same time affirm their commitment to basic human rights and freedoms. They endorse the principles, but object to the particular institutions and procedures that the larger society has established to enforce these principles. They seek to create or maintain their own procedures for protecting rights, specified in tribal constitutions (some of which are based on the provisions of international protocols).

Of course, not all Indian groups accept the commitment to respect individual rights. One example of internal restrictions concerns freedom of religion on the Pueblo reservation. Because they are not subject to the Bill of Rights, tribal governments are not required to obey its strict separation of church and state. The Pueblo have, in effect, established a theocratic government that discriminates against those members who do not share the tribal religion. For example, housing

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benefits have been denied to members of the community who have converted to Protestantism. In this case, self-government powers are being used to limit the freedom of members to question and revise traditional practices.

The Pueblo also use sexually discriminatory membership rules. If female members marry outside the tribe, their children are denied membership. But if men marry outside the tribe, the children are members. Here again, the rights of individuals are being restricted to preserve a communal practice (although there is some debate about whether this membership rule is in fact the "traditional" one, or whether it was adopted by the Pueblo at the behest of the American government, which hoped thereby to minimize its financial obligations).

In other cases, tribal governments have become profoundly undemocratic, governed by strongmen who ignore traditional ideals of consensus and govern by a combination of intimidation and corruption.

In these cases, not surprisingly, members of the Indian community often seek some form of outside judicial review. These cases put liberals on the horns of a serious dilemma. This is no longer a case of whites imposing "our" norms on Indians, who would prefer to live by "their" norms. The problem, rather, is that Indians themselves are deeply divided, not only about their traditional norms, but also about the ability of their traditional decision-making procedures to deal with these divisions. In some cases, reformers seeking federal judicial review may form a sizable minority, if not a majority, within their community. For example, the Native Women's Association of Canada, worried about the danger of sexual discrimination on their reserves, has demanded that the decisions of Aboriginal governments be subject to the Canadian Charter.

The Limits of Toleration

How should liberal states respond in such cases? It is right and proper, I think, for liberals to criticize oppressive practices within indigenous communities, just as we should criticize foreign countries that oppress their citizens. These oppressive practices may be traditional (although many aren't), but tradition is not self-validating. Indeed, that an oppressive practice is traditional may just show how deep the injustice goes.

But should we intervene and impose a liberal regime on the Pueblo, forcing them to respect the religious liberty of Protestants and the sexual equality of women? Should we insist that indigenous governments be subject to the Bill of Rights, and that their decisions be reviewable by federal courts?

It's important here to distinguish two questions: (1) Are internal restrictions consistent with liberal principles? and (2) Should liberals impose their views on minorities that do not accept some or all of these principles? The first is the question of *identifying* a defensible liberal theory of group rights; the second is the question of *imposing* that theory.

The first question is easy: internal restrictions are illiberal and unjust. But the answer to the second question is less clear. That liberals cannot automatically impose their principles on groups that do not share them is obvious enough, I think, if the illiberal group is another country. The Saudi Arabian government unjustly denies political rights to women or non-Muslims. But it doesn't follow that liberals outside Saudi Arabia should forcibly intervene to compel the Saudis to give everyone the vote. Similarly, the German government unjustly denies political rights to the children and grandchildren of Turkish "guest-workers," born and raised on German soil. But it doesn't follow that liberals outside Germany should use force to compel Germany to change its citizenship laws.

What isn't clear is the proper remedy for rights violations. What third party (if any) has the authority to intervene in order to force the government to respect those rights? The same question arises when the illiberal group is a self-governing indigenous community within a single country. The Pueblo tribal council violates the rights of its members by limiting freedom of conscience and by employing sexually discriminatory membership rules. But what third party (if any) has the authority to compel the Pueblo council to respect those rights?

Liberal principles tell us that individuals have certain claims that their government must respect, such as individual freedom of conscience. But

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having identified those claims, we now face the very different question of imposing liberalism. If a particular government fails to respect those claims, who can legitimately step in and force compliance? (By "imposing" liberalism, I am referring to forcible intervention by a third party. Noncoercive intervention is a different matter, which I discuss below.)

The attitude of liberals toward imposing liberalism has changed over the years. In the international context, they have become increasingly skeptical about using force to compel foreign states to obey liberal principles. Many nineteenth-century liberals thought that liberal states were justified in colonizing and instructing foreign countries. Woodrow Wilson defended the American colonization of the Philippines in 1902 on the grounds that "they are children and we are men in these matters of government and justice." Contemporary liberals, however, have abandoned this doctrine as both imprudent and illegitimate, and sought instead to promote liberal values through persuasion and financial incentives.

In the case of self-governing indigenous minorities, however, liberals have been much more willing to endorse coercive intervention. Many American liberals assume that the Supreme Court has the legitimate authority to overturn any decisions of the Pueblo tribal council that violate individual rights. They commonly assume that to have a "right" means not only that legislators should respect one's claim, but also that there should be a system of judicial review to ensure that respect. Moreover, this judicial review should occur at a country-wide level. That is, in addition to the various state and tribal courts that review the laws of state and tribal governments, there should also be a Supreme Court to which all governments within the country are answerable. Indeed, many American liberals often talk as if it is part of the very meaning of "rights" that there should be a single court in each country with the authority to review the decisions of all governments within that country.

This is a very particularist understanding of rights. In some liberal countries (for example, Britain), there is a strong tradition of respecting individual rights, but there is no constitutional bill of rights and no basis for courts to overturn parliamentary decisions that violate individual rights. (The same was true in Canada until 1982.) In other countries, there is judicial review, but it is decentralized—that is, political subunits have their own systems of review, but there is no single bill of rights and no single court to which all levels of government are answerable. Indeed, this was true in the United States for a considerable period of time. Until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, state legislatures were answerable to state courts for the way they respected state constitutions, but were not answerable to the Supreme Court for respecting the Bill of Rights.

It's easy to see why American liberals are committed to giving the Supreme Court such wide authority. Historically, this sort of judicial review, backed up by federal troops, was required to overturn the racist legislation of Southern states, which state courts had upheld. Given the central role federal courts have played in the struggle against racism, American liberals have developed a deep commitment to centralized judicial review. So when a question is raised about self-governing indigenous peoples, many liberals automatically support centralized review, even though these peoples were historically exempt from any such external intervention.

In short, contemporary liberals have become more reluctant to impose liberalism on foreign countries, but more willing to impose liberalism on indigenous minorities. This, I think, is inconsistent. Both foreign states and indigenous minorities form distinct political communities, with their own claims to self-government. Attempts to impose liberal principles by force are often perceived, in both cases, as a form of aggression or paternalistic colonialism. And, as a result, these attempts often backfire. The plight of many former colonies in Africa shows that liberal institutions are likely to be unstable when they are the products of external imposition rather than internal reform. In the end, liberal institutions can work only if liberal beliefs have been internalized by the members of the self-governing society, be it an independent country or an indigenous minority.

There are, of course, important differences

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between foreign states and indigenous minorities. Yet, in both cases, there is relatively little scope for legitimate coercive interference. Relations between the majority society and indigenous peoples should be determined by peaceful negotiation, not force. This means searching for some basis of agreement. The most secure basis would be agreement on fundamental principles. But if the two groups do not share basic principles, and cannot be persuaded to adopt the other's principles, they will have to rely on some more minimalist modus vivendi.

The resulting agreement may well exempt the indigenous minority from the Bill of Rights and judicial review. Indeed, such exemptions are often implicit in the historical treaties by which the minority entered the larger state. This means that the majority will sometimes be unable prevent the violation of individual rights within the minority community. Liberals have to learn to live with this, just as they must live with illiberal laws in other countries.

It doesn't follow that liberals should stand by and do nothing. An indigenous government that rules in an illiberal way acts unjustly. Liberals have a right, and a responsibility, to speak out against such injustice. Hence, liberal reformers inside the culture should seek to promote their principles through reason and example, and liberals outside should lend their support. Since the most enduring forms of liberalization are those that result from internal reform, the primary focus for liberals outside the group should be to support liberals inside.

Moreover, there is an important difference between coercively imposing liberalism and offering incentives for liberal reforms. Again, this is clear in the international arena. For example, the desire of former communist countries to enter the European Community (EC) has provided leverage for Western democracies to push for liberal reforms in Eastern Europe. Membership in the EC is a powerful, but noncoercive, incentive for liberal reform. Similarly, many people thought that negotiations over the North American Free Trade Agreement provided an opportunity for Canada and the United States to pressure the Mexican government into improving its human rights record.

There are many analogous opportunities for a majority to encourage indigenous peoples, in a noncoercive way, to liberalize their internal constitutions. Of course there are limits to the appropriate forms of pressure. Refusing to extend trade privileges is one thing, imposing a total embargo or blockade is quite another. The line between incentive and coercion is not a sharp one, and where to draw it is a much-debated point in the international context.

Finally, and perhaps most important, liberals can push for the development and strengthening of international mechanisms for protecting human rights. Some Indian tribes have expressed a willingness to abide by international declarations of rights, and to answer to international tribunals about complaints of rights violations within their communities. They accept the idea that their governments, like all sovereign governments, should be accountable to international norms. Indeed, they have shown greater willingness to accept this kind of review than many nation-states, which jealously guard their sovereignty in domestic affairs. Most Indian tribes do not oppose all forms of external review. What they object to is being subject to the constitution of their conquerors, which they had no role in drafting, and being answerable to federal courts composed entirely of non-Indian justices.

This shows, I think, that the assumption of American liberals that there must be one court within each country that is the ultimate defender of individual rights is doubly mistaken, at least in the case of indigenous peoples. History has proven the value of holding all governments accountable for respecting human rights. But the appropriate forum for reviewing the actions of self-governing indigenous peoples may skip the federal level, as it were. Many indigenous groups would endorse a system in which their decisions are reviewed in the first instance by their own courts and then by an international court. Federal courts, dominated by the majority, would have little or no authority over them.

These international mechanisms could arise at the regional as well as global level. European countries have agreed to establish their own multilateral human rights tribunals. Perhaps North American governments and Indian tribes

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could agree to establish a similar tribunal, on which both sides are fairly represented.

This isn't to say that federal intervention to protect liberal rights is never justified. In cases of gross and systematic violation of human rights, such as slavery, genocide, torture, or mass expulsions, there are grounds for intervening in the internal affairs of an indigenous group. A number of factors are relevant here, including the severity of rights violations within the community, the degree of consensus on restricting individual rights, and the ability of dissenting members to leave the community if they so desire. For example, whether intervention is justified in the case of an Indian tribe that restricts freedom of conscience surely depends on whether it is governed by a tyrant who lacks popular support and prevents people leaving the community or whether the tribal government has a broad base of support and religious dissidents are free to leave.

I should note that my arguments here do not just apply to indigenous peoples. They also apply to other national minorities—that is, other nonimmigrant groups whose homeland has been incorporated into a larger state through conquest, colonization, or the ceding of territory from one imperial power to another. Nonindigenous national minorities include the Québécois in Canada and Puerto Ricans in the United States. These groups differ from indigenous peoples in many ways, but in all these cases, the role of the federal courts in reviewing the decisions of self-governing minorities should be settled by negotiation, not imposition.

Cases involving immigrant groups are quite different. It is more legitimate to compel respect for liberal principles. I do not think it is wrong for liberal states to insist that immigration entails accepting the state's enforcement of liberalism, so long as immigrants know this in advance, and nonetheless choose to come.

Thinking Creatively about Rights

I've argued that the group rights sought by indigenous peoples need not conflict with human rights, and that the relationship between the two must be assessed carefully on a case-by-case basis. Even when the two do conflict, we cannot assume automatically that the courts and constitutions of the larger society should prevail over the self-governing decisions of the indigenous group. Indigenous peoples have good reasons, and sound legal arguments, to reject federal review of their self-government.

We should, however, think creatively about new mechanisms for enforcing human rights that will avoid the legitimate objections indigenous peoples have to federal courts. My aim is not to undermine human rights but rather to find fairer and more effective ways to promote them.

As Joseph Carens puts it, "People are supposed to experience the realization of principles of justice through various concrete institutions, but they may actually experience a lot of the institution and very little of the principle." This is exactly how many indigenous peoples perceive the supreme courts of Canada and the United States. What they experience is not the principle of human dignity and equality, but rather a social institution that has historically justified their conquest and dispossession.

Moreover, to focus exclusively on the danger of internal restrictions is often to miss the real source of injustice. The fact is that many indigenous groups feel compelled to impose internal restrictions because the larger society has denied them legitimate external protection. As Denise Réaume has noted, part of the "demonization" of other cultures is the assumption that they are naturally inclined to use coercion against their members. But insofar as some groups seem regrettably willing to use coercion to preserve traditional practices, this may be due, not to any innate illiberalism but to the fact that the larger society has failed to protect them. Unable to get protection for its lands and institutions, the minority turns to the only people it does have some control over, namely, its own members. This tendency does not justify internal restrictions, but it suggests that before we criticize a minority for imposing restrictions on its members, we should first make sure we are respecting its legitimate group rights.

Our goal, therefore, should be to find new mechanisms that will protect *both* the individual and group rights of indigenous peoples. We need to think about effective mechanisms, acceptable to indigenous peoples, for holding their govern-

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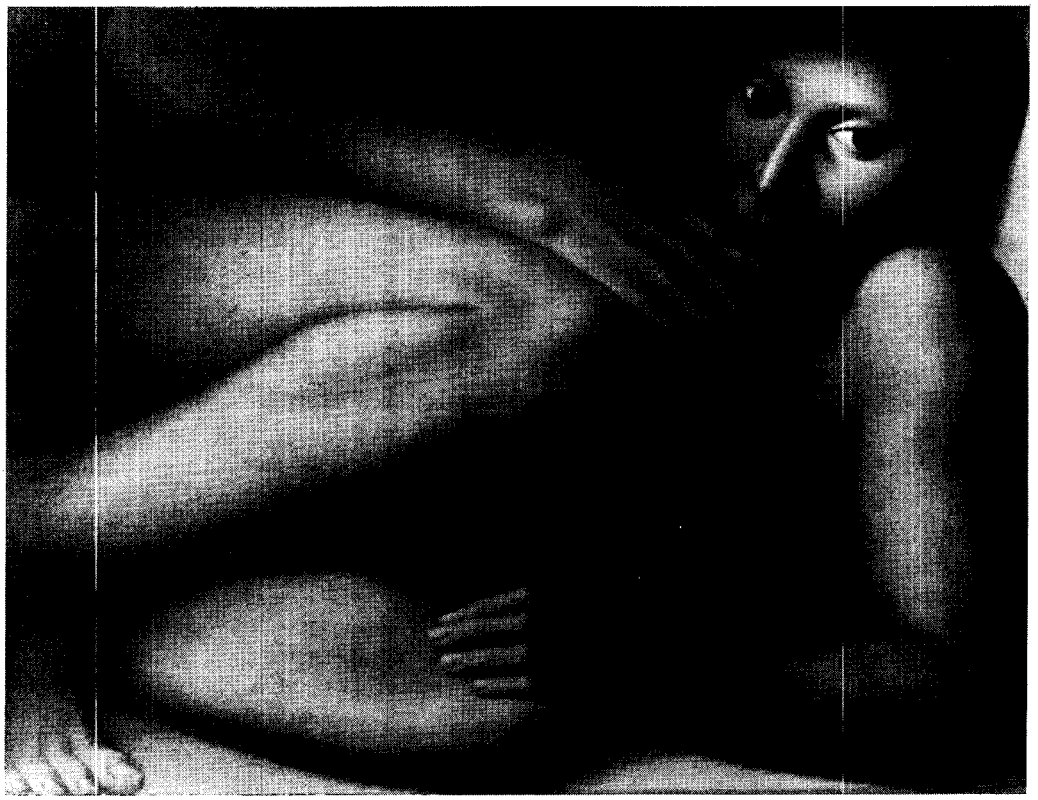
ments accountable for the way individual members are treated. But we need simultaneously to think about effective mechanisms for holding the larger society accountable for respecting the group rights of indigenous peoples. Focusing on the former while neglecting the latter is counterproductive and hypocritical.

Many indigenous peoples have looked to the United Nations, and its draft declaration on indigenous rights, as a possible forum for pursuing these twin forms of accountability. Unfortunately, both the Canadian and U.S. governments have been reluctant to give any international body jurisdiction over the treaty rights, land claims, or self-government rights of indigenous peoples. Viewed in this light, the real obstacle to a more satisfactory balance of individual and group rights is not the refusal of indigenous peoples to accept external review, but rather the refusal of the larger society to accept restrictions on its sovereignty. □



George Tooker, Man in the Box, *1967, collection Dr. and Mrs. Fouad A. Rabiah, courtesy Chameleon Books.*

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Aryeh Neier

LANGUAGE AND MINORITIES

Of the many conflicts worldwide over minority rights, one of the most enduring, intractable, and lethal is the struggle in Sri Lanka between Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese majority. In thirteen years of civil war, a country with no external enemies, a prosperous, literate population, and a long history of peaceful relations between different ethnic groups has become a symbol of uncontrollable violence. These days, one hardly ever reads of Sri Lanka in the world press except when there has been an especially grisly event: a passenger plane downed, abductions by security forces followed by disappearances, a massacre that wiped out an entire village, or a bank blown up at the height of the business day.

Missing from virtually all the press coverage of Sri Lanka is any mention of the grievances that led to the conflict. Indeed, one wonders how important those questions remain to the perpetrators of the violence. Do they themselves recall how they got to this point? Or are they too preoccupied with exacting revenge for the other side's most recent brutalities to pay much mind to the conflict's origins?

If one does look back, it appears that the quarrel that started the troubles—which have led to more than fifty thousand deaths and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands—was over language. Indeed, language is involved in disputes over minority rights in many countries, including our own.

During the two centuries of British rule preceding Ceylon's independence in 1948, the language of government and business was English. Yet only a relatively small part of the population spoke the language of the colonial rulers. The English speakers held the country's key civil service posts and were prominent in commerce. Among them were a significant number of Tamils. After independence, members of the Sinhalese majority—constituting roughly three quarters of the population—sought to end the dominance of English speakers by demanding a "Sinhala-only" policy in the schools and in government administration. Prime Minister Bandaranaike took up the Sinhala-only cause and, in 1956, Parliament adopted an Official Language Act. In protest, a general strike was called in Tamil areas, leading to riots and scores of deaths. Though it took more than a quarter of a century, and many missteps in public policy along the way, adoption of the Official Language Act was a major milestone on the long path to civil war.

Turkey is another country where language policy played a leading role in fomenting a protracted civil war. The dark side of the modernizing and unifying legacy of Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, builder of the modern Turkish state, has been the government's unwillingness to acknowledge ethnic differences in the population. Until a few years ago, members of the Kurdish minority of about ten million were forbidden to identify themselves as Kurds and many were imprisoned for speaking the Kurdish language. Today, largely as a consequence of international pressure, the Kurds may speak Kurdish, buy and sell tapes of Kurdish music, and give their children Kurdish names. They are still not permitted to study in Kurdish in the schools, however. Nor may the Kurdish language be spoken on radio or television broadcasts. As in Sri Lanka, it is far from clear that changing such policies would

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bring an end to armed struggle. This conflict too has acquired a life of its own.

Language policy has been particularly significant in recent struggles over minority rights in the countries of the former Soviet empire. It is a focal point of strife in Latvia and Estonia, which have large minorities of ethnic Russians. Many in those Baltic countries resent all ethnic Russians who live there, considering them Soviet colonizers. Today, those Russians suffer various forms of discrimination of which the most important is eligibility for citizenship. Not only does this bar them from voting, but they are also denied government employment and the right to own land. In Latvia, noncitizens, who constitute close to 30 percent of the population, are also kept out of certain categories of private employment and receive reduced pensions and social benefits. Language is the principal factor on which citizenship is denied even to ethnic Russians who were born in Latvia or Estonia and who have lived there all their lives.

During the half century of Soviet rule that preceded independence, Russians, Ukrainians, and members of other ethnic groups in Latvia and Estonia had little need to learn what are now the official languages of their countries. Knowledge of the Russian language sufficed. According to government information, nearly two-thirds of the noncitizens in Latvia themselves believe that they lack the proficiency in the Latvian language needed to pass the language test required by the citizenship law.

For a period, the government of President Boris Yeltsin justified the presence of Russian troops in the Baltic countries by pointing to the need to protect the rights of the Russian minority. Fortunately, those troops have been withdrawn, and tensions over the rights of Russian speakers have eased somewhat in the last two years as a consequence of legal and administrative reforms undertaken in response to prodding by the High Commission for Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Yet if a strongly nationalist regime should come to power in Moscow, continuing discrimination against Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia could provide a pretext for a renewed threat against Baltic independence. (Purported mistreatment of the Sudeten Germans was, of course, Hitler's claimed rationale for invading Czechoslovakia.)

Among the other ethnic groups in Eastern and Central Europe engaged in disputes over linguistic rights are Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia and Hungarians in Romania, Slovakia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (in Vojvodina, an ethnically mixed area where Serbs are the majority and Hungarians are the largest minority). Each is a potential flash point for conflict, but by far the most explosive is the situation in Kosovo. There, ethnic Albanians, constituting about 90 percent of the population, have organized a parallel society. Albanian children boycott state-sponsored schools in favor of classes conducted in their own language in private homes; and Albanian families stay away from the state's health care system, including its hospitals, making do with such medical treatment as they can obtain at clinics from doctors and nurses who speak their own language.

These parallel institutions were organized in Kosovo following the June 1990 decision by Serbia's legislature, under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, to revoke the autonomy that Kosovo had enjoyed constitutionally since 1974, and the accompanying purge of ethnic Albanians from public service. Language played an important role in the purges. An example was the firing of doctors for refusing to write prescriptions and medical reports in the Cyrillic script used by Serbs.

There is, of course, nothing new about discrimination on grounds of language. Herodotus divided humanity into Greeks (that is, all who spoke Greek, whether they were Athenians, Lacedaemonians or Trojans) and barbarians (everyone else). The concept of language as the distillation of the experience of a particular group of people that may be called a nation is far more recent, however. It was developed by the German poet and philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder in his *Treatise On the Origin of Language* (1772). A generation later, the concept was endowed with heightened nationalist fervor by Johann Gottlieb Fichte in his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807-1808), in which he proclaimed the superiority of an original language,

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such as German, to composite or derivative languages such as English or French. In Fichte's view, all whose language is German are part of the German nation (the *Volk*), regardless of whether they are divided by political boundaries. This view shaped the German approach to citizenship, which, as Rogers Brubaker has pointed out, is founded on the idea of "a community of descent, restrictive towards non-German immigrants yet remarkably expansive toward ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, reflect[ing] the pronounced ethno-cultural inflection in German self-understanding." Even in recent times, when Germany has been relatively permissive in its immigration and asylum policies, it has made the acquisition of citizenship difficult for those lacking German ethno-linguistic ancestry; and there is a current of opinion among German nationalists that considers that those who live among Germans while speaking other tongues endanger the German nation by sullying its language.

There is little need to spell out the historical consequences of ethno-linguistic nationalism. In our time, Latvians and Estonians who advocate restrictions on the rights of ethnic Russians cite the German example in justification. More ominously, it is possible to hear echoes of the thought of some of the German Romantic philosophers and their followers in other countries in the rhetoric of contemporary apostles of ethnic cleansing. Indeed, one of the latter, Radovan Karadzic, takes pride in pointing out that he is from the same family as Vuk Karadzic (1787-1864), the codifier and purifier of the Serbian language.

At various times, efforts have been made in international law to protect the rights of linguistic minorities. As a condition for membership, the League of Nations required some countries, newly established following World War I, to sign treaties guaranteeing respect for the rights of minorities, including their linguistic rights. In the post–World War II era, the main provision of international law dealing with this question is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which 130 countries worldwide are state parties. Article 26 guarantees "equal and effective protection against discrimination" on various grounds, including language; and Article 27 asserts that: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language."

In its wording, Article 27 elegantly overcomes the difficulty of determining whether the rights of minorities are individual or collective. It proceeds from the assumption that cultural, religious, and linguistic rights are individual but recognizes that the manner in which they are exercised is "in community with the other members of their group." Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern the impact of these provisions on many states that have agreed to be bound by them. A number of countries that have legislated discrimination against linguistic minorities are among those that have ratified the covenant.

A number of European agreements also include provisions intended to protect the linguistic rights of minorities. Though these are not sufficiently comprehensive or detailed to deal adequately with many of the issues that have arisen, and most do not constitute binding international law, they have been helpful in easing disputes over language in several countries. The principal reason is that some of the small states that emerged out of the dissolution of the Soviet empire are eager to gain full acceptance in the institutions of Europe and, therefore, are sensitive to efforts by representatives of those bodies to get them to comply with European standards on minority rights. The OSCE has been particularly effective, in large part because of its appointment of an unusually effective diplomat, Max van der Stoel, former foreign minister of the Netherlands, as its high commissioner for minorities.

The United States is also engaged in a dispute over linguistic rights. At this writing, some twenty-one states have adopted laws declaring English to be the official language. Efforts are being made by the English-only movement to secure federal legislation along the same lines. An organization called U.S. English Inc., which includes the names of Jacques Barzun, Saul Bellow, and Arnold Schwarzenegger on its letterhead, has promoted this cause with mass mailings arguing that practices such as instruction in

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the schools in languages other than English is a cause of "strife, divisiveness and chaos in our society." The efforts of the English-only lobby are supported by such prominent political figures as House Speaker Newt Gringrich.

The United States Supreme Court recently agreed to review a case in which the constitutionality of an English-only amendment to the Arizona Constitution was challenged. Adopted in 1988 in a referendum in which it was approved by 50.5 percent of the voters, the Arizona amendment has been held to violate the United States Constitution's First Amendment by lower federal courts. The case they considered was brought by a bilingual state employee who processed medical malpractice claims. When dealing with Spanish-speaking claimants, she spoke Spanish to them. In her lawsuit, she pointed out that she was forbidden to do this by the English-only amendment to the Arizona Constitution.

The Supreme Court's ruling in the Arizona case may not provide a clear-cut decision on the merits. There are procedural difficulties with the case that may sidetrack the court. If the court does confront directly the question of whether English-only laws violate the federal Constitution, the decision will probably be of landmark significance. However, it will not be the first time that the Supreme Court has dealt with language laws.

The court dealt with an attempt to impose linguistic uniformity as far back as 1923 when it considered a Nebraska law that prohibited the teaching of foreign languages in public or private elementary schools. Justice James C. McReynolds's decision for the Court in *Meyer* v. *Nebraska*, in which a teacher appealed his conviction for teaching German in a parochial school, has long been regarded as a classic of civil liberties jurisprudence as it not only invalidated a particularly pernicious attempt to legislate xenophobia, but also helped to define the limits on state power; protected family autonomy by asserting the rights of parents to direct the upbringing of their children; and provided one of the foundation stones of the right to privacy. The court also dealt with language questions a half century later, in 1974, when it upheld bilingual educational assistance to non-English speaking Chinese students in San Francisco. That case, however, avoided broad constitutional issues such as those dealt with in *Meyer* v. *Nebraska* and those that might have to be considered if the Supreme Court deals with Arizona's English-only amendment on its merits.

One of the arguments of the English-only proponents is that all should be able to communicate with each other through a common language. There can be no quarrel with this. Nor can there be a quarrel with those in newly created or newly reborn states if they take measures to make it possible for all to read, write, and speak the language in which the affairs of state are transacted. Accordingly, it is appropriate for any government to require that schools should fulfill the state's compulsory education requirements by providing instruction in that language, that students may be tested to demonstrate that they have met those requirements, and that state employment may be conditioned on possession of the language skills needed to perform the duties of the post. What is objectionable, however, is when promotion of a common language is pursued in a manner that asserts ethnic dominance.

There can be no justification for state policies that prohibit minorities from communicating with each other in their own language through their own educational, cultural, religious, business, or civic associations, or to speak their own language in public. Minorities should enjoy a right to use their own language in newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, and other media. And they should be able to establish schools at all levels of education that offer courses in the language of their choice so long as they also fulfill the state's compulsory education requirements, including instruction in a common language.

A much disputed question, of course, is whether the state itself should be required to provide opportunities for bilingual education where substantial numbers of children begin their school years knowing only a minority language. There is little doubt that the chances for such children to succeed in school are greatly enhanced if bilingual education is provided, at least until the point where they master another language. Failing to provide bilingual education

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may condemn minority children to falling behind.

Depriving minorities of public or private employment opportunities because of language requirements that are unrelated to their duties is obviously unfair. So, of course, is conditioning property holding or social benefits on linguistic proficiency, or on citizenship that is itself dependent on the ability to pass a language test.

As to citizenship itself, it does not seem objectionable for a state to insist that immigrants should pass a minimal test in the language in which public officeholders communicate and political campaigns are conducted before obtaining eligibility to vote. Yet the situation is obviously different when the language of a state is changed to assert the preeminence of a particular ethnic group, or when a new state is created through the breakup of another state or through the rearrangement of national boundaries. In such a situation, it can hardly be contended that a language test is needed to establish that the individual is capable of making intelligent choices. When changed political circumstances suddenly transform such persons as the ethnic Russians in Latvia into a minority, a language test is of no relevance in determining whether they know where their interests lie. Denying them the right to vote is simply a means to obstruct their ability to protect those interests.

As the case of Sri Lanka demonstrates, the stakes can be high when a state develops its language policy. Its interest in unity, its tolerance for diversity, its commitment to equality of opportunity, its sense of national identity and its prospects for peace may all be involved. Many thorny issues may arise that have not been considered here, and determining the best way to deal with them will not be easy. Yet a good place to start is by upholding the right of individuals—"in community with the other members of their group"—to use their own language. □

RENEWING THE LEFT

POLITICS, IMAGINATION, AND THE NEW YORK INTELLECTUALS

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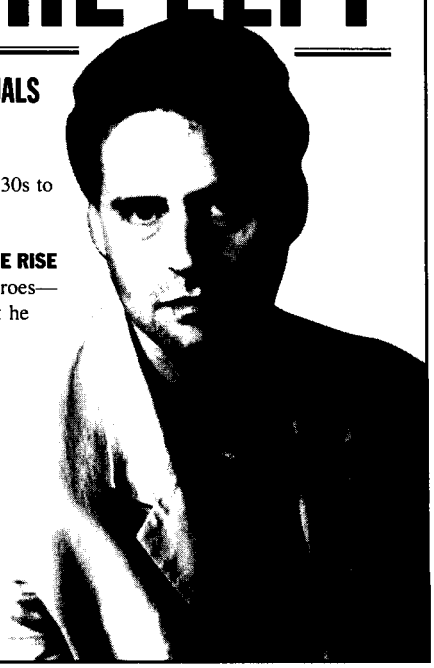

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Daniel A. Bell

MINORITY RIGHTS: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

I cannot stand forward, and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. —Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

A small set of crucial human rights are valued, at least in theory, by all governments in the contemporary world. Rights against torture, murder, genocide, and slavery are simply not contested in the public rhetoric of the international arena. Of course, gross violations occur "off the record," but in such cases the task of the human rights activist is to expose the gap between public allegiance to rights and the sad reality of ongoing abuse. There is not much point deliberating about practices that everyone already condemns.

But political thinkers and activists can and do take different sides on many pressing minority rights conflicts. Whether the dispute is over the choice of language in schools and parliaments, the decentralization of governmental powers to regions controlled by minorities, or the protection of traditional homelands, there do not seem to be any readily available general proposals for noncontroversial solutions.

In my view, it is important to refrain from moral and political judgments about disputes of this sort until one has acquired detailed knowledge of local political circumstances and relevant cultural outlooks. Unlike most contemporary philosophers and political theorists, I want to found judgments not on principles derived from reasoning about universal human needs and interests but rather on the actual dispositions and pressing concerns of a society in this or that historically contingent condition. This "culturally sensitive" approach, needless to say, requires a great deal of time and energy spent learning a society's culture, history, politics, and language, but there may be no other path to sound and effective political judgments. In this essay I propose four arguments in favor of a "culturally sensitive" approach to minority rights.

Identifying the Group

Political thinkers tend to define cultural groups in terms of language, race, or religion. Vernon Van Dyke, for example, defines an ethnic community as "a group of persons, predominantly of common descent, who think of themselves as collectively possessing a separate identity based on race or on shared characteristics, usually language or religion." If the aim is to identify vulnerable minority groups deserving of special political rights, however, definitions in terms of shared language, race, or religion may have the effect of unjustifiably rewarding some groups and denying the legitimate aspirations of others.

It is instructive to look at some examples from China. According to the Chinese government, there are over fifty-five ethnic minorities in the country, amounting to more than 8 percent of the population. These officially recognized minorities are labeled as such by virtue of being "non-Han," meaning they do not use the Chinese script or bear all the physical characteristics of the Han Chinese. Leading experts on

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the subject such as June Teufel Dreyer (author of *China's Forty Millions*) and Colin Mackerras (author of *China's Minorities*) also operate with the government's definition of a minority group.

Contrary to popular belief, the Chinese government does recognize in principle that minority groups are entitled to special status in the Chinese political system. For example, the National People's Congress in 1984 passed "The Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities" that allows for self-administration in Tibet and other "minority regions." Self-administration in practice, needless to say, does not amount to much. But some tangible benefits are in fact granted to officially recognized minority groups. Nicholas Tapp notes that "provisions for representation of minority nationalities in state organs, general exemption from the most stringent applications of the regulations on birth control, and the lower marks commonly required of members of minority nationalities who apply for admission to universities or colleges add up to a policy of positive discrimination."

The problem, however, is that under the current system benefits may accrue to individuals and groups not in need of special protection. Not surprisingly, the children of mixed marriages between Han and minority members usually choose minority rather than Han status. Whole counties and districts have applied for autonomous minority status on the basis of extremely slender evidence, such as the discovery of non-Han names in genealogies of several generations' depth.

At the same time, restricting the definition of minority groups to shared language or ethnicity can conceal vulnerable minority groups from political view—and so play into the hands of conservative majorities intent on denying legitimate aspirations for self-administration. As Emily Honig explains in her book *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980*, the prejudice against Subei people is comparable to that experienced by African-Americans in the United States. Unlike African-Americans, however, the Subei are not physically distinct from the rest of the Shanghainese population, almost all of whom are Han Chinese. Rather, Subei are defined as such by virtue of being individuals whose families were originally poverty-stricken refugees from Jiangsu province. The political result is that Subei people do not benefit from the official Chinese policy of positive discrimination and special political representation for minority groups.

Consider as well the development of a distinctive Taiwanese identity defined primarily by a common experience with free market institutions and (more recently) a relatively democratic form of government rather than by shared language and ethnicity. Any prospect for a fair and workable reunification with the People's Republic of China cannot ignore the fact that many Taiwanese now think of themselves as sufficiently distinct to seek some form of self-administration. But this is a non-issue if one accepts the official Chinese view that the Taiwanese are not a distinct cultural grouping. And defining minority groups in terms of language or ethnicity leads one to endorse the official view.[1] Vulnerable minorities are more likely to be protected by policies sensitive to their actual history and self-understanding.

Trade-Offs

Much ink has been spilled debating whether or not civil and political rights need to be sacrificed in the interests of economic development. Proponents of "authoritarianism"—primarily government officials in East and Southeast Asia—argue that if factional opposition threatens to slow down economic development or to plunge the country into civil strife, then tough measures can and should be taken to ensure political stability. Liberal thinkers in the West then counter by reaffirming the value of civil and political liberties for human beings in general or by pointing out that social scientific evidence simply does not support the claim that there is a causal connection between authoritarianism and economic success.

There is, however, a narrower claim being presented by "authoritarian" governments that cannot be dismissed so readily: namely, that particular rights may need to be curbed in particular contexts, for particular economic or political purposes, as a short-term measure, in order to

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secure a more important right or to secure that same right in the long-term. Xin Chunying, a lawyer working at the Human Rights Center of the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences, notes that East Asian governments emphasize "the particularity of human rights protection and the priority determined by the specific conditions of each country."[2] Justifications for the temporary suspension of a particular right are put forward by government officials, but often attract significant local support.

Consider for example the recent political history of Singapore. Kevin Tan, a professor of constitutional law at the National University of Singapore, notes that Singapore in the 1960s was plagued by a "communalism which pitted Singapore's majority Chinese population against the minority Malays." Communalism, and the attendant threat of racial riots, was dealt with by measures intended to construct an ethnically neutral national identity that might override particularist commitments to ethnic groups. This included such policies as a public housing program designed to break up ethnic enclaves and compulsory education in the unifying language of English.

These policies seem problematic: what do minority rights mean in practice if not the right to education in one's mother tongue and the right to live together as a community? Note, however, that the Singaporean government need not object to the principle of minority rights. If all it meant to say is that rights had to be curtailed in response to a pressing social problem (the need to curb racially motivated violence), then it seems besides the point to counter with the argument that rights are universal and cannot be restricted under any circumstances. Singaporean officials can concede that governments ought ideally to secure minority rights, adding that *in this case* these rights had to be sacrificed in order to secure more important rights to life and minimal subsistence.[3]

Nor would it be appropriate to respond with social scientific evidence based on generalizations. The specific argument that in the Singaporean context restricting minority rights was the most effective way of dealing with racial riots need not be (and may not be) a general argument for repression. It is simply not relevant to point out that other countries do not face similar problems or that social peace can sometimes be secured without similar restrictions.

When countering specific trade-off arguments for rights violations, one can question either the premise that the society under question is actually facing a social crisis requiring immediate political action or the idea that curbing minority rights is the best means of overcoming that crisis. But whatever the response, the social critic must be armed with detailed and historically informed knowledge of *that* society.

Of course, even if the critic were to concede (a) that the social crisis is real and (b) that curbing minority rights is the most effective way of overcoming it, such local justifications for the denial of minority rights are only of limited validity: they no longer apply once the crisis is overcome. But local knowledge is also necessary for the argument that the "state of emergency" can, and therefore should, be lifted.

Local Justifications

It is commonly believed that secular Western societies are uniquely tolerant and respectful of nonmainstream ways of life, including the cultural particularities of minority groups. From this it follows that policies designed to protect vulnerable minorities must draw on the social experiences and political ideals of Western societies, cast in universalist terms.

Against this view, however, it can be argued that *values* similar to Western conceptions of minority rights can also be found in some non-Western cultural traditions. For example, Nurcholish Madjid of the Indonesian Human Rights Commission notes that "Islam too recognizes . . . the right to use one's own language, the right to practice one's own culture, and the right to freedom of religion."[4] Moreover, if the purpose of rights is primarily to protect minority cultures from the political decisions of the majority, then clearly the *functional equivalents* of rights practices can sometimes be found in non-Western traditions. Chinese rule over Tibet in the mid-eighteenth century, for example, was primarily a matter of form, with the Tibetans in

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charge of their own affairs so long as they secured social peace and recognized a formal link with China. The Dalai Lama proposed a similar formula in 1988, but the Chinese government, seemingly oblivious to historical precedent, denounced the offer, calling it a "disguised form of independence."

Still, the struggle to promote minority rights is more likely to be won if it is fought in ways that build on, rather than challenge, local cultural traditions. Consider the case of the persecution of the Al-Arqam Islamic group in Malaysia. In accordance with a ruling from the "National Fatwa Council" and a decree by the Ministry of Home Affairs in August 1994, the Malaysian government launched a systematic campaign to suppress the Al-Arqam group. The Malaysian leader and founder of Al-Arqam, Ashaari Muhammad, was arrested and held without charge or trial; the group's written, audio, and visual presentations were banned; and Malaysian Muslims were prevented from joining Al-Arqam or participating in any of its activities.

In the eyes of Islamic legal scholar and human rights activist Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, however, the government of Malaysia "violated *Shari'a* law in the name of protecting Islam against 'deviationism.'" Deviationism, explains An-Na'im, is unknown to any orthodox formulation of *Shari'a*. The government of Malaysia could potentially have appealed to the notion of apostasy (although many Muslim scholars today oppose this view of *Shari'a*), but "by failing to apply even the notion of apostasy with its own legal safeguards under . . . Islamic law, the government of Malaysia has given itself licence to penalize and persecute Ashaari and his followers without conforming to the demands of the principle of legality and rule of law under *Shari'a* itself."

No doubt the government of Malaysia's behavior can also be criticized by appealing to non-religious political principles. An-Na'im notes, for example, that the "secular" human rights activist can criticize the government of Malaysia for denying a group of citizens their freedom of belief and for detaining them without charge or trial on the basis of a ruling from a council of "religious scholars," hence violating the principle that religion not be used for political ends. Perhaps the social critic could also invoke Article 27 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: "In those States in which ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." This right, the secular activist will argue, is due all human beings simply by virtue of their humanity, and does not depend on the interpretation of a particular religion or cultural tradition.

But how persuasive are these universal justifications in a country dominated by a Muslim majority where rights are generally thought to have theocentric foundations[5] and where Islamic legal codes already shape family and criminal law? In this context, arguments that appeal to widely shared religious values are far more likely to be effective than arguments founded on the principle that a human rights regime mandates a strict separation between religion and the state. And even if changes can be temporarily instituted on the basis of secular human rights principles, *long-term commitment* to minority rights is best secured by drawing on the expressed aspirations of those who adhere to a particular tradition.

In short, local cultural traditions may well provide sufficient resources to justify local commitment to values and practices similar to minority rights, and strategic considerations may speak in favor of using these resources to protect vulnerable groups.

Non-Liberal Cultural Traditions

But while some aspects of local culture may be invoked for this purpose, the problem is that other aspects can justify curtailing minority rights. For example, the many references in the Confucian tradition to "barbarians" may lend support to "civilizing missions" that have the effect of annihilating non-Han Chinese cultures. One response available to the proponent of a "culturally sensitive" approach is that even aspects of cultural traditions seemingly inconsistent with minority rights can sometimes be re-interpreted in ways that render them consistent. But these

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re-interpretations are unlikely to be widely accepted, and one might conclude that culturally sensitive approaches need to be buttressed by a U.S.-style right to free speech so that majority viewpoints can be challenged and eventually replaced by values more supportive of minority rights. As Professor An-Na'im puts it, "there must be the widest possible multiplicity of voices and perspectives on the meaning and implications of cultural norms and institutions."

I am inclined, however, to question the need for an internal cultural discourse that allows for "the *widest possible* multiplicity of voices and perspectives." What is needed is a mechanism for change within a tradition that allows minority viewpoints to become dominant or, at least, politically relevant. But this mechanism need not be an absolute right to free speech, and more generally it need not be the same in all times and places.

Consider the case of Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa, a leading pro-democracy activist in Thailand and a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1991, the Thai ruler, General Suchinda, pressed charges against Dr. Sulak for *lèse majesté* and for defaming him (the general) in a speech given at Thammasat University. Fearing for his life, Sulak fled the country, but returned in 1992 after the Suchinda government had fallen to face the charges. In court, Sulak did not deny that he had attacked the "dictator" Suchinda, but he did deny the charge of *lèse majesté*, referring to the many services he had performed for the Royal Family. Sulak explains: "I did not . . . stake my ground on an absolute right to free speech. My defense against the charge of *lèse majesté* was my innocence of the charge; my defense was my loyalty to the King and Royal Family and, even where I discussed the use of the charge of *lèse majesté* in current Siamese political practice, it was to highlight abuse and to point to the ways in which abuse might undermine the monarchy, rather than to defend any theoretical right to commit this action. I am not affirming, nor would I affirm, a right to commit *lèse majesté*. This aspect of the case is particularly concerned with my being Siamese and belonging to the Siamese cultural tradition."[6]

In other words, Dr. Sulak aimed to persuade fellow citizens that the dominant political system should be replaced with an alternative, relatively democratic political structure, but he made it explicit that he did not want to challenge a mechanism for change that places a constraint on direct criticism of the Thai king. There is no reason to doubt Dr. Sulak's sincerity (perhaps he, like many Thais, would feel deeply offended, if not personally harmed, by an attack on the king). Is there anything wrong with a mechanism for changing a cultural tradition that has constraints like this one, endorsed by both defenders and critics of the prevailing views?

Liberal thinkers may worry about this line of argument. The claim that for strategic reasons the social critic should sometimes appeal to local traditions to justify values and practices that in the Western world are normally realized though a rights regime may be palatable, but few liberals will go along with the suggestion that cultural traditions can provide a genuinely moral foundation for illiberal norms and political practices. This latter argument may be employed as an excuse to justify or "tolerate" the subjugation of members of cultural groups who have been denied the opportunity to reflect on and criticize norms of deference and humility to powerful leaders.

Still, one can exaggerate this worry. For one thing, there may not be many other examples of illiberal constraints on challenges to prevailing cultural viewpoints endorsed by both political leaders and leading social critics (certainly one could not justify curtailing rights against murder, torture, slavery, and genocide on these grounds). Moreover, the argument for respecting the norms and practices endorsed by most adherents of particular cultural traditions (including leading social critics) can sometimes be employed to *expand* rather than *restrict* the set of rights typically enjoyed by members of liberal Western societies. For example, East Asian societies influenced by Confucianism strongly emphasize the value of filial piety or the idea that children have a profound duty to care for elderly parents, a duty to be forsaken only in the most exceptional circumstances. In political practice this means that parents have a right to be cared for by their children and that it is in-

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cumbent on East Asian governments to provide the social and economic conditions to facilitate the realization of this right. Political debate tends to center on the question of whether the right to filial piety is best realized by means of a law that makes it mandatory for children to provide financial support for elderly parents (as in Singapore or Japan), or whether the state should rely on more indirect methods such as tax breaks (as in Hong Kong) and housing benefits that simply make care for the elderly easier. But the argument that there is a pressing need to secure this right in East Asia is not a matter of political controversy.

Let me be more explicit about how these arguments may bear on the question of protecting vulnerable minorities from the decisions of majorities. On the one hand, respect for minority groups in liberal societies may translate into (illiberal) restrictions on criticism of aspects of cultural traditions held to be sacred by all (or nearly all) members of those groups. For example, Bhikhu Parekh suggests that laws against libel can be employed to protect minority cultures from various forms of defamation and hate speech. On the other hand, a richer and fuller respect for minorities may translate into expanding the set of social and economic rights typically granted in liberal societies. Perhaps the parents of East Asian immigrants can be given the right to immigrate as well, and adults of East Asian origin who care for their elderly parents can be given a special right to claim tax benefits. Nor should one rule out the possibility that liberal majorities learn from the cultural traditions of minority groups. In an age when Social Security payments may no longer be economically sustainable at their current level and when it is widely seen as morally acceptable in the West to commit relatively fit elderly parents to nursing homes, it may not be entirely implausible to promote the value of filial piety in liberal societies. But whether the issue is restricting rights, expanding rights, or learning from nonliberal cultures, the political proposals that we endorse should always be based on detailed knowledge of the cultural self-understandings of minority groups. □

Notes

[1] It is worth noting, however, that in a different context even the Chinese government concedes that minority groups with legitimate aspirations for autonomy need not be defined in terms of language or ethnicity. In the case of Hong Kong the Chinese government officially endorses a "one country, two systems" political proposal for rule in the post-1997 period. What defines group particularity in this case is shared attachment to the rule of law and experience with a free economic system, not shared language or ethnicity.

[2] I quote from a paper presented at a workshop held in Hakone, Japan, June 1995, the first of three workshops on the theme "The Growth of East Asia and Its Impact on Human Rights." More generally, the second through fourth sections of this essay draw on papers presented in Hakone and at the second workshop held in Bangkok, Thailand, March 1996, as well as on ideas contained in my article "The East Asian Challenge to Human Rights: Reflections on an East West Dialogue," forthcoming in the *Human Rights Quarterly*, August 1996.

[3] It is worth noting that Article 4 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) explicitly allows for short-term curbs on some rights (including the right to the protection of minority cultures, Article 27) if these are necessary to deal with particular social crises. Article 4 goes on to state that the derogation of rights against murder, torture, and slavery, among others, may not be made under this provision.

[4] It is not well known that the Iranian Parliament guarantees five seats for religious minorities. Jews, Zoroastrians, and Armenian and Assyrian Christians are allowed to elect deputies. A recent article in the *International Herald Tribune* noted that "Iran's 30,000 Jews turned out in force in general elections here to elect their representative to the Islamic republic's Parliament." (March 13, 1996)

[5] I do not mean to imply that Islamic countries are unique in this regard. Many religious Americans, for example, might think that the idea of human rights derives its ultimate justification from God's special concern for human beings.

[6] Dr. Sulak explains that he uses "the older terms *Siam* and *Siamese* rather than the government terms *Thailand* and *Thai* out of respect for the non-Thai minorities within the country. The word *Thailand* was initially imposed by the dictators in 1939."

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Part II: The State of Minorities

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Jane Jenson

QUEBEC: WHICH MINORITY?

Any report from Quebec requires that the reporter disclose where she stands in this complex political field. The very notion of being in a "minority" depends on one's standpoint. For example, I am part of Canada's anglophone majority (three-quarters of Canadians use English as their primary language) as well as the federalist majority (that is, I want Quebec to remain in Canada). Nonetheless, I have equally relevant minority identities. As a third-generation Anglo-Quebecker I am a member of a minority group within Quebec society (83 percent of Quebec residents speak French at home).

We Quebeckers are also a minority within Canada, residents of one of its ten provinces. In the referendum of October 30, 1995, a near majority (49.6 percent, with a 94 percent turnout) of that minority voted in favor of sovereignty for Quebec. Among those who said Yes to the Parti québécois (PQ) government's question, polls uncovered uncertainty about the meaning of their vote. Some simply wished to send a strong message about the need for Canada to recognize francophone Quebeckers as a people. Nevertheless, October 30 did clearly announce that many Quebeckers demand a change in Quebec's political status.

Finally, federalists, even if they "won" the 1995 referendum, are in many ways a minority in Quebec. Indeed, demographic predictions suggest that if the sociology of the vote remains the same, the sovereignty option will carry the day in the next referendum.

These three minorities are not the same people, nor is their political field the same.* English-speaking Quebeckers confront the provincial government when they claim linguistic rights, with the courts, especially the Canadian Supreme Court, as an ally. Quebeckers, whether anglophone or francophone, confront the rest of Canada when they seek recognition of Quebec as a distinct political community. And losers in the next referendum will have to argue their case in the court of international public opinion if they seek to delegitimate the democratic credentials of a majority vote or if they try to convince the federal government to protect their "partitioned homelands."

Everyday politics in Quebec may be the politics of minorities, but there is no single "minority." Each individual in Quebec belongs to at least one. Whether and how claims are made depend on the concrete political situation as well as on the identity privileged by the claimants.

Signs of the Times

Since October 30, 1995, the ball has been in the federal government's court. Its strategy was to sit out the campaign, confident that the Yes vote was no more than a minority in Quebec. Federal strategists were totally unprepared for the strength of popular support for the idea that Quebec should form a "partnership" with Canada, around shared institutions, a common currency, and the like. The rest of Canada still must come to terms with the situation. In the confusion,

* It is also very important to note that none of these positions reflects that of Aboriginal peoples living in Quebec, who have their own right to national recognition, and make different claims to linguistic protection and the right to stay with Canada in the event of the separation of Quebec. Their situation is complex and legitimate enough to merit separate full treatment.

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some have argued that the rules of the game must be changed. One strategy involves asserting that only a majority substantially larger than 50 percent plus one is sufficient to legitimate separation. Another is to insist that all of Canada has a right to participate in any decision about Quebec's future. Neither of these strategies is likely to succeed. In both 1980 and 1995 the federal government accepted the principle that the "majority" in Quebec could decide. It is far too late to convince anyone that next time Quebec must submit to new rules imposed by the majority of the country.

The fact that the constitutional question is on low simmer does not mean that other dimensions of minority politics are any less likely to boil over. Revived controversy about language policy has real potential for destabilization. The debate is about the right of the French-speaking majority of Quebec to affirm its commitment to its own language and culture, a commitment that inevitably confines it to minority status in North America. Since the 1970s, governments of Quebec, both PQ and Liberal, have passed laws to protect and promote French. In 1977, the central goal declared in the Charter of the French Language was to make French the public language (*langue commune*) of Quebeckers. It clearly diverged from the model of official bilingualism promoted by the government of Canada in the 1970s. The charter sought to protect French by promoting, and even compelling, its use. One set of measures was designed to make French the language of choice in the immigrant-receiving society that Quebec is. Therefore, children of those who immigrate to Quebec are obliged to study in French schools. Second, the "public face" of Quebec would be French. The law originally required unilingually French commercial and other signs. Since a change made by the Liberal government in 1993, some signs may now be bilingual, but must give clear priority to French. Products sold in Quebec must have French labels, and francophones have the right to receive all services, public and private, in French. Third, Quebeckers gained the right to work in French, and companies are compelled to demonstrate that they are moving toward *francisation*.*

This legislation has worked. The public face of Quebec is a French-speaking one, and polls record a high level of satisfaction with the current legal situation. Nonetheless, the issue remains unsettled. The decision to allow some bilingual commercial signs troubles many nationalists, who fear that an efflorescence of English signs, especially in Montreal, will provoke demands for official bilingualism. This slippery-slope argument is not without credibility.

The 1993 amendment permits but does not require bilingual signs; many stores have chosen to continue their previous practices. Since the 1995 referendum, however, parts of the anglophone community have become increasingly militant, demonstrating publicly to force department stores in predominantly anglophone areas to provide bilingual signs. These demands are phrased in a language of rights—the "right to shop" in English. The absence of such signs is deplored as signaling "lack of respect" for the anglophones. As claims to such so-called "rights" intensify, two lessons can be drawn. One is that the language of rights is expandable, and the second is that the 1993 compromise lacked the coherence of earlier legislation, thereby making it harder to defend.

Although the platform of the sovereignist party, the Parti québécois, pledges to repeal the 1993 law, the PQ government elected in 1994 has done nothing to reverse it. It seemingly accepts the former government's rationale, which is that some visible English presence is needed to strengthen Montreal's place as an international city open to global economic forces. A simplified version of the argument is that international business speaks English, and people coming to Montreal from around the globe will feel more welcome if they can read the signs. Thus, the argument is a practical and economic, not a rights-based, one. Yet it has opened a breach into

* This French word has been incorporated into Quebec English to describe the process by which institutions increase their capacity to provide services to their workers and clients in French. The details of language legislation are too complicated to present here, as is its history. For an excellent overview see the report of the Interministerial Committee on the Situation of the French Language, *Le français. Langue commune* (Québec: ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 1995).

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which minorities can insert their claims, and which others then feel compelled to close, in order to protect the underlying vision of language legislation.

This type of destabilization is also evident in other domains. Since 1977, the anglophone minority has feared that its educational and social institutions will wither for lack of clientele. Recent fiscal policy decisions are feeding this concern. Although anglophone school boards, hospitals, and other institutions providing basic services are guaranteed protection, only sufficient clientele and adequate financing will make this guarantee meaningful. Obviously, the policy of funneling virtually all immigrants into French schools and the substantial exodus of Anglo-Quebeckers from the province means that the population base of the schools is shrinking. In 1971-1972, 16 percent of schoolchildren studied in English, but by 1994-1995, the number was 10 percent for the whole province. In Montreal, with the largest concentration of anglophones, the comparable figures are 36 percent to 26 percent. And recent reductions in health care spending have forced several anglophone hospitals in Montreal to close.

The haunting sense of living in a disappearing community has not been allayed by recent expressions of goodwill on the part of the new premier, Lucien Bouchard. He became leader of the Parti québécois and premier as the popular replacement (his current approval rating is higher than 70 percent) of the discredited Jacques Parizeau, who angrily blamed the referendum defeat on "money and the ethnic vote." Parizeau's outburst caused dismay not only among those whom he targeted, but also among those nationalists whose vision of an independent Quebec is one of a polyethnic and multinational society. The new premier has taken a different tone, reaching out to minorities within Quebec. He does not ask them to abandon their support for federalism; rather he wishes to allay their fears about their status in a sovereign Quebec and to engage their cooperation in revitalizing the provincial economy, especially in Greater Montreal, which contains more than half the population and generates almost two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product.

Such efforts to engage in dialogue, to express tolerance, and to acknowledge the contributions of anglophones to modern Quebec are very important. They cannot, however, totally alleviate the fears. Many doubt the sincerity of the PQ leadership, particularly as they see budget cuts reducing their services. Putting Quebec's fiscal house in order is Bouchard's primary short-term goal. In other words, economic policy works against the protection of minority rights as much as do heated debates within the ranks of the Parti québécois about language law.

Partition Talk

Since the referendum, parts of the anglophone minority have exhibited a siege mentality that is highly dangerous. They advocate "partition," proposing that if the majority of Quebec were to vote to secede, strongly federalist municipalities could then hold their own referenda about staying part of Canada. The result would be to partition Quebec into a series of noncontiguous "homelands." Only Aboriginal peoples living in Quebec have thus far been able to gain broad pan-Canadian support for a strong (if not watertight) claim to split their territory from an independent Quebec, so as to remain with Canada. The discourse of Aboriginal peoples' challenge to Quebec's territorial integrity has been annexed by anglophones, albeit to advance quite different arguments.

An idea that had never seemed more than a mean-spirited threat to go home with one's marbles was given credence by the intervention of the federal government. In January 1996, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and the newly appointed Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion declared that "if Canada is divisible, so is Quebec." The idea prompted outcries in Quebec and the rest of Canada about the danger of such talk, as well as derision about its impracticality. The idea is impractical in that the areas that voted No in the referendum are not linguistically homogenous; they contain large numbers of francophones, many of whom are federalists to be sure. Therefore, partition would simply create more minorities. At the same time, a few moments of reflection reveal that municipalities are not self-sufficient units. Residents of Greater Montreal, for example, cross municipal

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boundaries for secondary schooling and health care, not to mention for employment. But more than this, it had become obvious that such partitions could occur only if the Canadian army were used to enforce them. The language of violence and armed conflict was being invoked and the situation threatened to deteriorate. As a result, the federal government backed away from talk of territorial divisibility.

Assuring a Democratic Future

Nonetheless, the specter of partition did force many to confront basic principles. For francophone federalists the issue was not a hard one. Although a referendum vote for sovereignty would clearly indicate that they had become a political minority, they are Quebeckers. Therefore, they would never choose to abandon their lives as Quebeckers to remain Canadians; their wish is to be *both*. For anglophones the issue was less clear-cut. In effect, partition-talk forced them to confront their willingness to comply with a democratic decision that would leave them no longer part of the anglophone majority in Canada but simply a minority within Quebec. This question obviously evoked matters of identity. Similarly, it forced people to decide whether they were willing to compromise their commitment to democratic decision making and to validate threats of force.

Far beyond that, however, it compelled serious strategic thinking. One could think and behave like a member of a majority, thereby choosing to focus on opposition to sovereignty and its high costs. The calculation is that a tough stance will cause waverers among the Yes voters of 1995 to appreciate the real costs and complexities of trying to take Quebec out of Canada. The danger is, of course, that such threats and tough talk might simply rile Quebeckers, causing support for sovereignty to climb. The alternative is to behave like a minority in Quebec and insist on the protection of language rights, as well as cultural recognition, not only in the present but in any future independent Quebec. The risk here is that by envisioning it, one would in fact aid the transition toward separation.

This is the dilemma that confronts Anglo-Quebeckers. We realize that when one is at a political crossroads, as we are, the democratic routes are not clearly marked. Legitimate claims for protection of minority rights do not define the political strategy for achieving them, precisely because the very status of "minority" is so mutable. In such situations, then, our first commitment must be to the importance of protecting and expanding the democratic political process by which such claims-making occurs and within which it must be resolved. □

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Randall Kennedy

ON RACIAL INTEGRATION

The historian Oscar Handlin noted in 1965 that the "attention [of the civil rights movement] has been so narrowly focused on tactical issues that there has been no time to consider ultimate goals." He warned that "[i]n the absence of defined goals, it is difficult to estimate the character or pace of change or even to judge its direction." Unfortunately, Handlin's complaint, now thirty years old, remains relevant. One obvious indication is the confusion that shrouds discussion of race relations, including key words that are often used with little attention shown to the complexities they embody. One such word is "integration."

Integration is best understood in relation to two other key words: "segregation" and "desegregation."

When people speak of segregation, they typically refer to policies or practices that separate the races to the detriment (many think) of racial minorities. Under *de jure* segregation, government officials purposefully keep races apart in settings such as education, housing, employment, and transportation; this stigmatizes and handicaps the politically vulnerable race by relegating it to facilities that are not only separate but also inferior. Under *de facto* segregation, government officials (and other influential decision makers) do not purposefully keep the races separate but decline to undo the patterns of separation and inequality that were intentionally established in the past. *De facto* segregation is perpetuated by the momentum generated by *de jure* segregation.

Desegregation is a concept still mired in controversy four decades after the Supreme Court concluded in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* that *de jure* segregation is not an innocuous distinction but an impermissible form of oppression. In the aftermath of *Brown*, some observers concluded that all that desegregation required was that officials cease to use race itself as a criterion for dealing with people. Desegregation would be accomplished when, instead of using race to steer students to this or that school, officials used place of residence, test scores, or some other nonracial criterion as the basis for pupil assignment. This view might have triumphed had it not been for obstreperous segregationists who fought even formal changes in Jim Crow pigmentocracy. In response to them, a second body of opinion emerged on the requirements of desegregation.

This concept demands more of government than the first. It calls for an end to the use of racial criteria by officials, but it also requires them to take steps to uproot the vestiges of *de jure* segregation. Desegregation, in this view, entails remediation for the past harms caused by segregation. This is the dominant perspective within the Supreme Court right now. Even the most conservative justices say that they adhere to it. There is, however, an important split within this body of opinion.

Conservatives typically define the idea of vestiges of segregation narrowly. They insist on demonstrable evidence tying past wrongdoing to contemporary ills. "The vestiges of segregation that are the concern of the law," Justice Clarence Thomas writes, "must be so real that they have a causal link to the *de jure* violation being remedied." Conservatives also give considerable deference to freedom of choice as an acceptable explanation for racial separation in

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such contexts as schools and housing. According to Thomas, "[t]he continuing 'racial isolation' of schools after *de jure* segregation has ended may well reflect voluntary housing choices or other private decisions."

By contrast, liberals define the idea of vestiges of past oppression more broadly. They presume, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that there is notable racial inequity due to past wrongdoings, and that this warrants remedial redress. Liberals also tend to be skeptical of the innocence of "free" choice when the obvious consequence is racial separation. They believe that such choices are probably tainted by the expectations, fears, and prejudices that were drummed into the hearts and minds of people socialized by an oppressive racial order; that order may now be formally dead, but its long-term impact is still deeply felt.

These differences between conservatives and liberals mark out battle lines that have scarred American society in every major struggle over race policy during the past forty years. But whatever the arguments about defining the scope of "past wrongs," there is an implicit consensus that it is morally proper, indeed, required to right them. In a sense, then, most of the influential political actors in the United States, conservatives and liberals alike, are desegregationists, at least in theory and rhetoric. And while the courts may quarrel about what constitutes a vestige of segregation or about the best ways to remedy its wrongs and to desegregate society, whether one speaks of Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas on the right or William Brennan and the late Thurgood Marshall on the left, the most influential jurists in the past few decades have been desegregationists, albeit of varying degrees of intensity.

Different Concepts of Integration

Many people use desegregation and integration as synonyms. That is understandable. In many contexts, vigorous desegregation is virtually indistinguishable in practice from integration. It is useful, though, to distinguish the terms. Desegregation, as the structure of the word suggests, aims principally to undo segregation. Thus another term—*integration*—is needed to describe nonremedial policies that are aimed, for instance, at creating or sustaining interracial interaction in an institution that never engaged in purposeful segregation, an institution that seeks to embrace new immigrants of color who have never previously been victimized by racial discrimination in America or an institution in which it has been determined that past wrongs have been rectified by a process of desegregation that is now complete.

But there are also various types of integration, and it is worthwhile to explore them. One might be called "amalgamation"—the literal blending of races through voluntary sexual intimacy, resulting in a new, distinctly American multiracial hybrid. This sort of aspiration has been the object of many sharp attacks, especially by white supremacists, who condemn "mongrelization." Indeed, it was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court, in the exquisitely titled case of *Loving* v. *Virginia*, barred states from prohibiting interracial marriage. Unsurprisingly, advocates of integration through interracial marriage have articulated their views only sporadically. One such racial egalitarian was Wendell Phillips, who declared in 1863 that he placed his hopes on "that sublime mingling of the races, which is God's own method of civilizing and elevating the world. Not that amalgamation of licentiousness, born of slavery—the ruin of both races—but that gradual and harmonizing union, in honorable marriage, which has mingled all other races."

Akin to amalgamationism is the brand of integration associated with Martin Luther King, Jr. It does not expressly promote physical union (though it does not discourage it either), but it champions the creation of new communal affiliations in which interracial affections are a positive good. Desegregation, according to King, "is eliminative and negative, for it simply removes . . . legal and social prohibitions. Integration is creative, and is therefore more profound and far-reaching. . . . Integration is the positive acceptance of desegregation and the welcomed participation of Negroes into the total range of human activities. Integration is genuine intergroup, interpersonal doing." Pressing on, King observed that "[w]e do not have to look very far to see the pernicious effects of a desegregated society that

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is not integrated. It leads to 'physical proximity without spiritual affinity.' . . . elbows are together and hearts are apart." Integration, King implied, means bringing together hearts and minds on the basis of human bonds much more profound than feelings of racial kinship. "I have a dream," King declared in his most famous speech, "that one day . . . little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers."

A third brand of integration is less focused on inculcating interracial attachments and more concerned with the strategic placement of blacks in influential, power-shaping forums. This approach fosters policies that assure the presence of racial minorities in a wide variety of institutional settings including universities (in both student and faculty populations), workplaces, juries, governmental commissions, boards of trustees and directors, slates for honorary degrees and other awards, and so on. This might be called "diversity integration," and it is currently the most widely practiced and consequential form of racial integration.

Finally, there is a fourth concept of integration that is propounded by many people who would likely resist being labeled as integrationists. I will call this the school of "pluralist integration." On one hand, its proponents want blacks to be full beneficiaries of America's bounty and full participants in its polity. On the other hand, many of them suspect that colored people will always be outsiders in America, that racial inequality will be a permanent feature of its social landscape, and that any substantial gains by colored people will come from hard bargaining with the white power structure—bargaining backed up by mobilized groups organized around their identity as racial minorities.

Pluralist integrationists resist racial blending (à la Wendell Phillips) or racial mixing (à la Martin Luther King, Jr.) as diversions from the more urgent project of inculcating a strong sense of racial kinship among colored people. They do not want to leave America or form a separate state here, but they do want colored people to be a strong, cohesive actor to induce the white majority to cede to colored communities their fair share. Group competition is thus assumed to be a fact of American life; consequently, any group that is not well organized will be hurt in struggles for power. The proponents of this view are the ideological heirs of the Black Power movement, and one can see its practical expression today in the numerous racially defined caucuses in the professions—the Congressional Black Caucus, the Black Law Students Association, the National Association of Black Social Workers, the National Black Caucus of Librarians, and so on—and in industry, as well as in efforts to press legislatures to create black majority electoral districts.

A wide spectrum of concerns and sentiments animates these overlapping camps. Some integrationists are inspired by an ethos of human solidarity; thus they seek to subvert all arrangements that discourage universalism and divide diverse people. Cross-racial bridges are their response to the racial conflict that they think is so pervasive and destructive in America. Others urge integration to secure the allegiance (or at least cooperation) of alienated outsiders; the assumption is that a diverse society requires diverse perspectives and experiences to produce better education and decision making. For still others, a major rationale for integration is prophylactic. They fear that if white and colored people are separate, the white majority will discriminate in favor of itself. Their alternative is to ensure that the races are so thoroughly interwoven that whites cannot discriminate in favor of themselves without simultaneously helping a large number of colored people or discriminate against colored people without simultaneously harming a large number of whites. So, the best way to guarantee black schoolchildren a good education is to tie their fate to that of white children, and they should all go to the same schools and have the same resources.

Tragic Failure?

Tom Wicker calls integration "the tragic failure." Political scientist Gary Orfield speaks of "the loss of the integrationist dream." Columnist Clarence Page asks, "Who killed integration?" Is it time to write an obituary for integration? I don't think so, but there are good reasons why its advocates

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should be concerned. For one thing, affirmative action is quite visibly under siege, challenged on the grounds that racially defined measures to ensure even a modicum of diversity in public agencies and institutions is unwise, unfair, and violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Foes of affirmative action find an increasingly sympathetic ear in the federal judiciary. One telling example is the recent Court of Appeals decision in *Hopwood* v. *Texas*. The University of Texas Law School was ordered to abandon race positive criteria for admission whether the aim is classroom diversity or remedying of past discrimination in the state educational system. If the consequence is a radical reduction in the numbers of blacks and Hispanics in Texas' flagship law school—well, that's not to be considered. Another, related, example is the Supreme Court's recent invalidation—as a violation of the equal protection clause—of a congressional districting scheme that aimed to create majority-black districts. These judicial actions have counterparts in administrative decisions such as that of the California Board of Regents to end racially defined affirmative action in admissions to state-supported colleges and universities. And those who initiated the upcoming referendum on affirmative action in California hope that popular opinion will bring its end.

What fuels this reaction? In part, it is that old nemesis of integration: the ideology and habits of white supremacy. But it is also due to the fears of people—whites—who feel squeezed and insecure and are desperate to maintain their place amid powerful downdrafts of social and economic decline. It is animated too by people who think themselves pro-integration but who fret that racially defined affirmative action is as divisive as it is integrative because it entrenches racial consciousness and racial boundaries.

I have, up till now, focused on white opposition to integration. But there is dissent as well from people of color. Emblematic is the campaign waged by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) to stigmatize and stop transracial adoptions. After all, what could be a more vivid example of integration than adults of one race adopting children of another? In the mid-1960s, influenced by the integrationist mood of the times, whites began to adopt children of color in unprecedented numbers. In the late 1960s, pursuant to the teachings of Black Power, the NABSW began to object to this on the (spurious) grounds that it is bad for the adoptees and threatens minority communities with "cultural genocide."

Some people of color believe that there are forms of integration that come with insulting undertones—for instance that what colored people most want is to rub shoulders (if not genitalia) with whites. Another is that colored people cannot learn or produce anything outstanding on their own. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton articulated this sentiment in 1967 in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*:

> "Integration" as a goal today speaks to the problem of blackness not only in an unrealistic way but also in a despicable way. It is based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, black people must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that "white" is automatically superior and "black" is by definition inferior. For this reason, "integration" is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy.

A quarter-century later, Clarence Thomas echoed these words when he supported the defendant' hool desegregation suit initiated by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in Kansas City, Missouri. Justice Thomas, along with a majority of the Supreme Court, concluded that a federal court had no grounds on which to order the maintaining of so-called "magnet schools" (which sought to attract white students who might otherwise leave the public schools to attend suburban or private schools). "It never ceases to amaze me," Thomas declared, "that the courts are so willing to assume that anything that is predominantly black must be inferior." Rejecting the idea that integrated schooling was constitutionally required or educationally preferable, Thomas suggested that

> it may very well be that what has been true for historically black colleges is true for black middle and high schools. Despite their origins in the shameful history of state-enforced segregation, these institutions can be both a source of pride to blacks who

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have attended them and a source of hope to black families who want the benefits of . . . learning for their children. . . . Because of their distinctive histories and traditions . . . black schools can function as the center and symbol of black communities, and provide examples of independent black leadership, success, and achievement.

Prospects

Clearly the forces arrayed against integration are many. There are, however, other factors at play that allow for at least some optimism. First and foremost is this: across a wide span of the political spectrum—from the editors of *Dissent* magazine to the leaders of the Republican party —the absence of people of color (particularly blacks) in their ranks is considered a real problem, even if it is not due to discrimination. Ronald Reagan and George Bush railed against quotas, but they both had an unspoken quota system that included at least one black in the cabinet. Bob Dole, too, denounces quotas, as does Bill Clinton. But if Dole were to be elected, he would also include (as Clinton has) at least one black in his cabinet. There is a widespread feeling that some minimal black representation is required.

One might balk at calling this "integration"; tokenism may seem a better word. Such criticism raises a difficult conceptual problem attached to the term "integration": how much of an interracial presence is necessary for something to be rightly described as "integrated." I cannot answer this satisfactorily but I do think whatever leads major white politicians to believe that they must have a visible representation of colored people in their ranks, it is a marked advance over the sensibility prevailing in, say, 1960. Today white politicians in the highest circles feel compelled to include blacks openly in the governance of the nation—which was not the case when John F. Kennedy was president.

The elevation of Colin Powell as head of the National Security Council under Reagan and as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Bush is also noteworthy; there are few positions of more responsibility in the country. Since the Kennedy presidency, blacks have been named to a variety of high-level posts, but none before Powell's placed a Negro's finger at the center of the nation's (indeed the world's) very existence. And it was conservative Republicans who elevated Powell. This suggests that however powerful reactionary currents have been over the past thirty years, a forceful countercurrent has also been at work, quietly eroding white supremacist premises that, even at the height of the Second Reconstruction, would likely have prevented Lyndon Johnson from appointing a black as head of the armed forces as did George Bush three decades later.

Uneven moves toward integration can be seen in many other spheres of American life as well. Among the most influential supporters of affirmative action have been corporate executives and presidents of the most prestigious universities. There are, of course, a wide range of considerations that prompt them. For some, it is merely insurance against racial discrimination suits. For others it is simply public relations. But there are also a good many people in influential positions who sincerely prefer the distinctively vibrant ambiance of many interracial communities. And even those who laud diversity for the sake of public relations are evidence of something important: the emergence of a market for racial integration—of, for example, a body of students and parents, white as well as colored, who prefer racially diverse to monochromatic schools.

Even those who criticize integration of a certain sort often want integration of another sort. Carmichael and Hamilton denounced "integration" as "despicable" but sought "an effective share of the total power of the society." In other words, beneath a patina of nationalist rhetoric, they were, in the end, pluralist integrationists aiming to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the American polity. Similarly, black Harvard law students may echo Clarence Thomas on "integrationist condescension" (though most of them loathe other aspects of his conservative politics), but that does not dissuade them from attending the nation's most elite, predominantly white law school and yearning for positions at elite, predominantly white law firms.

As to foes of racially defined integrative measures, it's true that some are closet white supremacists. But others—both white and black—are committed antiracists who genu-

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inely believe that racially defined measures are destructive and that nonracial means of racial integration offer a better chance for racial justice and harmony in the future. To this extent, it is misguided to see opposition to affirmative action as a general rejection of integration. It is a hopeful sign when some integrationists—such as Glenn Loury and Shelby Steele—are in the opposition to racially defined affirmative action while other integrationists fervently support it. This suggests that the formidable energies now being brought to bear on this issue are not entirely retrograde and entail a more complex and not altogether regrettable dimension. And the presence of integrationists on both sides of the struggles over affirmative action and electoral districting also indicates a diffusion of antiracist sentiments across ideological boundaries.

In the end, the status of "integration" is, like most everything involving race, complex and ambiguous. One cannot be happy about the present situation. For one thing, Pat Buchanan's candidacy and the muted reaction to its racist underbelly vividly demonstrate that old-fashioned white supremacist notions are still frighteningly present, tolerated, and influential. At the same time, to assert that it makes no difference if *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* or *Brown* v. *Board of Education* is the law of the land or that the country is in the grip of an unchangeable American-style apartheid is simply self-discrediting hyperbole. If one reads *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal's epic portrait of race relations in America in 1945, and compares what it describes with today's situation, one will repeatedly find cause to rejoice in the changes that have come about thanks to the constant, intelligent, and courageous efforts of people, high and low, of all hues, who have tried mightily to move daily practices closer to enlightened ideals. Though many difficult struggles lie in wait, racial integration, already an established part of American aims and expectations, will live and grow as we move from one century into another. □

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Michael Walzer

MINORITY RITES

Jews are not officially a minority in the United States today, but we were once, when I was growing up, the quintessential minority. We were the model with reference to which everyone else's moral and political attitudes were determined. Other people were judged tolerant or not on the basis of their behavior toward the Jews. And our responses to the "others" were the responses of a classical minority: eager for recognition and respect, always suspicious that we weren't being recognized and respected enough.

In 1944 my parents moved from the Bronx to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, taking my sister and me from a world where minority status was, so to speak, theoretical to a world where it was real. Our apartment house in the Bronx was overwhelmingly Jewish; in Johnstown, we were the first Jews on our street (which was called, jarringly to my politically precocious ears, Franco Avenue). All the kids in my New York school—at least all the ones I knew—were Jewish (the teachers were Irish Catholic); in Johnstown, there were only a couple of Jews in each class (and the teachers were mostly WASP).

The move must have been harder for my parents than it was for me, though they probably expected a more difficult reception than they got. Living in the Bronx was a way of avoiding the minority experience, but knowledge about that experience was unavoidable: conveyed from one generation to another with a grim certitude. But all that happened in Johnstown was that our neighbors on Franco Avenue never spoke to us—except for one sweet man who came over, after watching us for a few months, to offer advice about our "victory garden" (who says that Jews cannot be farmers?). In the twenty years that they lived in Johnstown, my parents never set foot in the home of a non-Jew. Nothing awful happened; no cross was burned, no swastika scrawled; I suppose you could say that they were tolerated on Franco Avenue. I think that they were grateful for that—and also angry about its limits.

But I played with all the kids on the block, and expected nothing less (though I remember hoping that my new friends would not associate my complete ineffectiveness on the football field with my being Jewish). We were in and out of each other's houses, and I even managed, a little later on, to associate a few of them with my first political venture, a little hectographed newsletter called *Between the Lines*, in which I discussed and ultimately disapproved of Henry Wallace's presidential campaign. Later still, I went with a Catholic friend to hear Joe McCarthy speak at a fairgrounds outside of Johnstown. My friend was half attracted; I was frightened and hostile, but our friendship outlasted the disagreement, and we never thought of it as a disagreement between a Catholic and a Jew. We were, in our own estimation, just two American kids with different political ideas.

In my high school class of seventy-three, there were five Jews, two boys and three girls, and the two boys (this was 1951) turned out to be the two most successful class politicians. I was elected president of the student council, running against the captain of the football team, and the other Jewish boy (but no one except me thought of him that way) was elected president of the senior class. This is not a story about anti-Semitism.

My only possible encounter with anti-Semitism had come a year or two before, when I

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circulated a petition among the students asking for a drivers' education course. A state law had recently been passed inviting local school boards to establish such courses, and providing cars at state expense. In our school district, such provision was taken as a clear example of creeping socialism and immediately refused. Hearing about my petition, the world history teacher called me in to tell me that this wasn't an American thing to do. She asked where my parents were born. My parents took this as an anti-Semitic question, which it probably was; I thought it was ridiculous. Lots of students signed my petition, just as lots of students voted for me in the council election; they didn't care where my parents were born. I can't say that they attended only to my wonderful qualities; they just let me play the game of high school politics like everybody else.

How can I explain, then, what I did immediately after my election? I can't remember what was in my head, what the chain of ideas was, or what my feelings were. But I marched into the principal's office and told him that he would have to cancel Friday night basketball games. I can't have meant that. Though I usually went to religious services with my family on Friday night, I had no deep religious sensibility; I also went to basketball games. The school had had a series of exciting teams; the star player two years before had been a Jewish kid—he regularly played on Friday nights. The games, as I was emphatically told, had always been held on Friday nights.

I think now that I was acting out an American minority rite, one of the ceremonies of arrival in this society, and one that I now see all sorts of other people acting out. It gains drama and intensity, magnitude too, in our contemporary urban centers; mine was an early and small example. But its structure has become familiar. I was a Jew with a chip on my shoulder, though nothing had ever happened to me, personally, that could account for the chip. My outburst was an announcement: *Here I am. Here we are. And you better pay attention.*

I can't have believed, I don't believe now, that I had a right or that Jews in general had a right to, say, Wednesday night basketball. But why not? Orthodox kids would not have been able to play on the school team or to attend the games—and this was, after all, a public school. Why shouldn't it have been required to accommodate them? Had there been a number of Orthodox kids, I might have had an argument, though (as I think now) not about rights, which are best reserved for more important matters. I could have argued about the value of mutual accommodation in a pluralist society. But I am sure that I wasn't thinking along those lines; anyway, none of the Jews in my class were Orthodox.

Maybe I was thinking strategically: let the principal know that, along with all his other problems, he now had a Jewish problem—so that arguments about quizzes on Yom Kippur or Christmas carols in music class might be a little easier. But I doubt that I was much of a strategist either. No. It just made me feel good to bring the principal up short. I felt that I was being faithful to all those Jews who had endured real persecution and real discrimination. It was a gesture of solidarity. I was engaged in . . . symbolic action.

Nowadays, I am very critical of gestural politics. It doesn't build coalitions; it doesn't advance common interests; it doesn't bring minority groups into the liberal-left mainstream. Remembering my own brief gestural moment, however, makes it easier to understand how people fall into that sort of thing—and how they get stuck there when coalitions come apart and common interests are neither acknowledged nor advanced. Even when you can say, "Here I am," and mean it, provocation is enormously tempting; it must be even more tempting when you say, "Here I am" with the disturbing sense that you are here alone or that you aren't yet really *here*.

The American ideal is that each person should be judged "blindly," as an individual with a proper, not a generic, name. Surely that is what we all want, and yet when we succeed, however modestly, we want something else as well: to be recognized as a representative, standing in for all the others, whom our success can't help or hasn't yet helped. More than that. Since being recognized as a "credit to your religion" (or race) is a very uncomfortable business, we have to be aggressively, provocatively, representative. We have to affirm, first of all to ourselves, that we haven't bought into the majority world. I didn't want to be the principal's tame Jew, so that he

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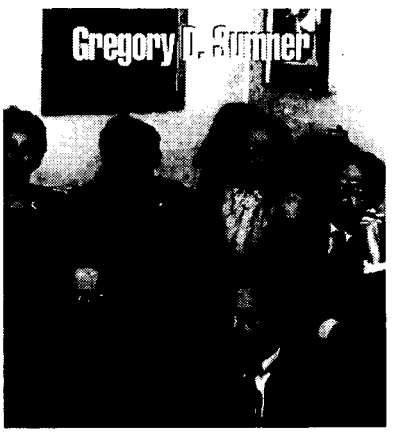
could boast of my earnest compliance and his own tolerant cooperation. I didn't want—and I can see this same negative intensity in minority kids today—to make things easy for him.

But there was no follow-up in my opposition to Friday night basketball, no petition campaign this time. I argued with the principal on a few other occasions, but I never discussed the matter with the other Jews in the class or with my non-Jewish friends, all of whom would have thought I was crazy. It was satisfying to confront the resident adult; I wasn't ready for a war with my fellow students. Today, identity politics is more public and, often, more fierce. But it is gestural in much the same way, with the same absence of political follow-up, the same contentment with provocation and shock.

In a radically individualist society like this one, it's not easy to move from these passionate minority rites to a politics of common interests. I am not sure what that move would have meant in Johnstown in the forties, where Jews were already a (small) part of the new alliance that, after the victory of the steel workers' union, took over the city government, sent a Democrat to Congress, and gave Harry Truman a big majority in 1948. Bethlehem Steel didn't hire Jews during my Johnstown years, so we were naturally on the other side (we had other reasons too); the coalition hardly had to be organized.

Today coalition politics always requires patient and careful organization. And the provocative announcement, "Here I am; pay attention," isn't in any obvious way the beginning of that process. The rest of us should certainly pay attention, but since demands like my own in 1951 won't be met, and probably shouldn't be, we had better have some serious alternatives ready. The opening jump will still be at seven o'clock on Friday, the principal might have said to me, but I will do what I can to make sure that the Jews are included in the course (there was only one) on world history. □

Dwight Macdonald *and* the *politics* Circle



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Jean Bethke Elshtain

LANGUAGE AND AMERICAN CITIZENS

In his classic *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville claimed, "Language is perhaps the strongest and most enduring link which unites men. All the immigrants spoke the same language and were children of the same people." These common points of origin, symbolized by language, helped to lay the basis of American democracy and made possible "true liberty." Even as Europe was riven by conflicts between dynasties and over religion, the Americans, exiles though they may have been, carried with them "that fertile germ of free institutions" that "had already taken deep root in English ways."

This is the sort of insight the most articulate "English-only" advocates point to when they insist that more is at stake than a common language for commerce or for everyday community. The fate of the republic, no less, lies in the balance. If we fail to teach newcomers the English language; if we fail to insist that all government business go forward in English; if we confuse helping non-English speakers to make their way to English with legitimating continued use of a "foreign tongue," we undermine the basis of our free institutions.

Is there a legitimate case to be made along these lines? My answer is a cautious "yes," but that case should not take the form of punitive "English-only" laws. With the Supreme Court poised to take up the question of Arizona's constitutional amendment, and with some twenty-two other states having passed symbolic official-English laws, the question promises to become a hot topic during this fall's presidential campaign. The Arizona law contains penalties for noncompliance and bars all official use of languages other than English in all governmental forms (including voting ballots). Support for "English-only" is running high—around 70 percent to 80 percent. Senator Bob Dole supports English-only legislation now pending in Congress; President Bill Clinton opposes it, although, as governor of Arkansas, he signed a version of an English-only law.

Do we require the glue of language to hold us together? Yes, we do, but a *common language* means having some widely shared understanding of public speech. It doesn't require the force feeding of English across the board. Transition to English takes place rather quickly—in roughly three generations. That is, immigrant parents will find it difficult to converse with their grandchildren unless they have themselves picked up a generous store of English words—and most do. In my own family the transition happened much faster. My mother could speak only a German dialect when she began first grade in a one-room school building in rural Colorado. When her youngest brother, Ted, began formal instruction some twelve years later, he was already an English speaker, having been taught English by my mother; two other sisters, Mary and Martha; and his older brother, Bill. None of my grandparents' twenty grandchildren speaks a German dialect. My grandparents learned enough English to say what they wanted to say to us, although my grandfather fell silent a lot. He had a huge incentive to learn enough English for public transactions, however, and he could bargain with anyone at a farm sale in good commercial, rough-and-ready English. My grandmother didn't bother to become a citizen until she was sixty-five or so—I helped to prepare her for her exam—but that wasn't because of language skills. She just didn't see the point until she heard

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so many of her children and grandchildren talking politics that she decided maybe she should be able to vote.

Our family story is probably not that unusual. The English-only people might argue that the reason it isn't unusual is that my mother and her siblings grew up at a time when we had an English-only public sphere and schools were dominated by English. This is only partly true. Many teachers had to know enough of certain immigrant tongues to help lead children into English. Nearly all immigrant communities read newspapers in their "own" language. Some of these newspapers, like the Yiddish *Forward* in New York City, have had great histories. The American union movement was always a colorful mix of immigrant traditions and languages, although some claim that is precisely why an indigenous labor-based party akin to European social democratic parties never emerged on these shores—there was no single tongue to help unify working men and women.

But tacit or informal English dominance is one thing. English-only legislation that goes beyond symbolic affirmation of the importance of a shared language to embrace punitive measures is another. Such efforts speak to our lack of confidence in our ability to transmit our culture. We are rightly concerned with what is happening to civic life in America. But we should demonstrate this concern in efforts to strengthen our public schools overall; to help rebuild our civic institutions, including our political parties; to revivify all the many associations that helped to shape our passions and interests, including the always difficult move from an immigrant past into an American present. If a political culture loses a sense of confidence and authority, draconian measures rush into the breach. We try to do by compulsion what we don't seem to be doing as part of a normal evolution. This is a mistake. But, then, so was much of the bilingual ideology that no doubt provoked English-only fervor.

What do I mean by bilingual ideology? I mean a stance that goes far beyond calling for transitional instruction to ease students over a four-to-six-year period into English. Instead, it is a dogma that proclaims indifference, at best, concerning public life and identity; that preaches the false but soothing notion that education should never change us in any fundamental way. But education always does. This is what it is meant to do. We do not emerge at the other end the same person—the same child—we were when we went in. The bilingual ideologists cling to the illusion that you can educate children into their "own" culture and help them to remain whatever their point of family origin suggests that they are. Schools, however, are not families. They are precisely the *un-familiar*. There is pathos, wrenching, sadness, separation in this story. There is also possibility, promise, enlargement, entry into a bigger story.

If a sin of the past was creating shame in children about their parents or grandparents' odd ways, a sin of the present is deluding ourselves that education should just deepen a pre-existing identity—or even, in certain forms of Afrocentricity, for example, *invent* a past that has no historic warrant. But we are living in a certain time and place; in one society by contrast to some other. What does it mean to take our bearings in this time and place? How do we best serve our children? How can we guarantee a fair opportunity to all? You cannot do that through failure to transmit the promise of a culture—a democratic culture—to all citizens. And—in this Tocqueville was right—language is "perhaps the strongest and most enduring link." I oppose the Arizona law. The other more symbolic efforts are anemic. They may assuage a certain anxiety. But they also instill fear in the hearts of many of our fellow citizens and would-be citizens. For English-only legislation suggests that we do not trust the newcomers among us enough to find their way to us; to join us and to make their own contributions to our common life.

Another characteristic of our time and place is a generalized fearfulness and anxiety. I submit that the source of English-only militance is our collective failure to sustain and transmit a strong yet critical version of our own past and present. Therefore, such militance is a sign of civic weakness, not strength. Unfortunately, it seems easier nowadays to make the grand gesture than to do the hard work of rebuilding our civic institutions; to this latter task, the English-only movement contributes nothing. □

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Suzan Shown Harjo

NOW AND THEN: NATIVE PEOPLES IN THE UNITED STATES

As this century draws to a close, Native Peoples are better off than at the start of the 1900s. However, in some respects little has changed.

In these ninety-six years, the number of Native Americans has grown from a near-extinction level of a quarter million to nearly two million, still less than 1 percent of the total U.S. population today. At the beginning of the century, Native Peoples ranked at the bottom of all U.S. socioeconomic indicators, with the lowest levels of life expectancy, per capita income, employment, and education; with the poorest health and housing conditions; and with the highest rates of alcoholism, suicide, infant mortality, plague, tuberculosis, diabetes, cervical cancer, and smallpox. This is an accurate profile of Native Peoples today, with two exceptions. Infant mortality has dropped to the second highest rate, and smallpox has been eradicated worldwide.

On the positive side, Native Americans now have the right to be buried and stay buried, as a result of repatriation and graves protection laws of 1989 and 1990, which changed longstanding federal policies that considered dead Indians the archaeological property of the United States. Those laws set in motion the return of human remains, sacred objects, and cultural property from museums and other institutions. Today's cultural and environmental laws also offer some protection against the excesses of Western civilization and have improved Native American lives and lands.

Native families now have more control over the health, well-being, and education of our children, and tribal governments now have a greater say in the administration of certain federal programs designed to benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives. These are significant advances. Along with the recently established National Museum of the American Indian, which will grace the National Mall near the Capitol at the start of the next century, they represent genuine progress and give Native Peoples reason for optimism. Much of the rest of the story is less than positive.

Now, as then, Native Peoples do not own what we should and do not control what we own, and our treaty and sovereignty rights, resources, and religious liberty are under persistent attack. The exercise of tribal rights, particularly to tangible resources, often evokes a backlash from states, local governments, and those non-Native businesses and individuals who are the nearest competitors for Native resources, with rhetoric as intense as the epithets that accompanied the Indian wars of the 1800s.

This was evident in the treaty fishing rights struggles during the 1960s and 1970s in the Pacific Northwest and during the 1980s in the Great Lakes region; in the controversy during the 1970s and 1980s surrounding tribal claims to land in Maine, Rhode Island, and other eastern states, which had acquired property in violation of the first federal Indian law, enacted in 1790, prohibiting the taking of Indian property by non-Indians without federal approval; and in water rights cases, which have continued throughout the century. Although these matters were resolved through orderly processes—the Indian treaty fishing rights were upheld in court and the water and land claims were resolved primarily through congressional settlements—cars can still be seen in many states sporting bumper stickers with such slogans as "Spare a Salmon / Spear an Indian" and "Save a Deer / Shoot a Pregnant Indian."

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Beginning in the 1950s, hate groups began to take aim at Indians. The Ku Klux Klan was removed forcibly from Robeson County, North Carolina, by the Lumbee Indians in 1958. KKK-related groups, such as the Aryan Nation, have taken up residence within the boundaries of Indian reservations and are attempting to undermine Indian rights from within, insisting, for example, that they should vote in tribal elections and participate in tribal governing, as if they were citizens of the Native nations whose prerogatives they oppose. Other hate groups have formed for the sole purpose of wiping out federal Indian treaties and all "special Indian rights." More than a few proponents of this school of thought now serve in Congress.

There remains a widespread perception that Native Americans, for the most part, ceased to exist at the end of the last century. This view is helped along by Hollywood, with even recent movies, such as *Dances with Wolves* and *Geronimo,* declaring Indians dead, nation by nation. While Native people were portrayed in early films as the "noble Savage" or the "savage Savage," the most popular of the 1995 crop emphasized for children the non-threatening "good Indian" stereotype in *Indian in the Cupboard*—about an inch-high Indian toy man—and *Pocahontas.*

Many scholars hold the view that being written out of history, being written about wrongly and being dehumanized in popular culture contributes to the low self-esteem among Native youth and to the overwhelmingly high rate of Indian teenage suicide, which is four times the national average.

Racial and ethnic stereotyping and name-calling are not considered suitable in polite society today. "Black Sambo" and the "Frito Bandito" are no longer visible, but Native Peoples are still used to sell products of all kinds. Sports mascots like "Chief Wahoo" and team names like the "Redskins" (the most derogatory word in the English language for Native Peoples) are not uncommon.

It is little wonder that some policy makers have difficulty crafting laws to address the pressing needs in Indian country. Good public policy is rarely developed for cartoons. When the perception of Indian wealth is added to this mix of ignorant views, the result is often an epidemic of envy and greed.

In the first half of this century, there was a popular misconception that all Indians were oil-rich, because black gold was found on some Indian lands. Many Indian people who could not read or write were cheated out of their property and money by bankers, lawyers, federal agents, and others they depended upon to help in their transition from poverty to wealth. Non-Indians murdered scores of Indians, mainly Native women in Oklahoma, for their land and mineral rights.

Modern black-gold mythology has it that Indians are rolling in gambling dough. But fewer than a hundred of the five hundred-plus Native nations have gambling enterprises at all. Only a handful are making the kind of profits that make headlines, while the rest are around the break-even level. Because of the success of the very few, several legislators want to cut federal Indian funding for health, education, and other programs that are sorely needed and that were the price the United States promised to pay in perpetuity in order to gain vast territory over which to govern.

An example of federal Indian policy making at its worst can be found in the area of Native Peoples' religious freedom. Indian religious ceremonies and practices were outlawed by regulations of the Secretary of the Interior in 1880, 1884, 1894, and 1904, and through circulars that were issued until the mid-1930s. Native Peoples were denied access to sacred lands, many of which have been desecrated and destroyed by federal, state, and private actions that continue today, and religious materials were confiscated by the U.S. Army and federal Indian agents and otherwise stolen for church coffers, museums, educational and scientific institutions, and other "collectors."

From 1934 to 1936, the regulations that forbade such "civilization offenses" as traditional dancing, praying at sacred sites, "practicing the arts of a conjurer," perpetuating tribal languages, and teaching Indian children "heathenish ways" were replaced by directives and a law respecting American Indian religious and cultural rights. These new mandates halted the across-the-board violations of religious and cultural liberties, but

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did not prevent continued encroachments on religious freedom or damage to places of worship. Beginning in the early 1970s, as the United States continued to permit actions that destroyed sacred sites and impeded religious practices, it also took steps to return specific sacred sites and to remove some barriers to religious practices.

In 1978, Congress articulated a broad policy, the American Indian Religious Freedom act, which acknowledged past error and promised to protect and preserve the traditional religions of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. In order to gain passage of the act—and to overcome opposition from federal land-managing agencies, states, and developers—its sponsor had to state on the floor of the House of Representatives that the legislation had "no teeth." In other words, the act was a good statement of intent and federal entities should comply with it, but Native Peoples could not use it to sustain a lawsuit to protect any holy place.

In a case that pitted a Forest Service logging road against a California Indian sacred site, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that neither the American Indian Religious Freedom Act nor the First Amendment of the Constitution provided a cause of action for protection of Indian sacred lands, noting that Congress could enact a statutory cause of action to fill the void. This left the Native Americans as the only people in the United States who cannot use the First Amendment's freedom of religion clauses to protect places of worship from desecration and destruction. Efforts since the ruling have failed to produce new laws for the protection of Native Peoples' traditional churches.

A concerted effort was undertaken in 1994 to achieve administrative action that could protect some of the endangered sites. A proposed Executive Order for Native American Religious Freedom and Sacred Lands Protection was negotiated with the Interior and Justice Departments early in 1995. As negotiated, the order would direct the federal agencies to develop Sacred Lands Protection Agreements with tribal and traditional religious leaders to prevent damage to specific sites. According to White House staffers, the agencies talked among themselves for most of 1995, finally transmitting their own version to the White House at the end of the year.

Since then, President Clinton has said that the order will be signed soon, which has Indians wondering not only when it will be signed, but what has taken so long and what exactly "it" is. In an odd exchange during a fundraising breakfast in February, Clinton revealed that he was in the dark, too. He reportedly responded to a tribal leader's inquiry about the order with, "I thought I signed that already." A White House staffer is said to have corrected his boss with, "Not quite yet, Mr. President."

In the eleventh-hour negotiations on the massive federal funding bill in May of this year, the White House caved in on only one of the many environmental riders it had vowed to veto: the one of paramount importance to Native Peoples. The president signed the money bill into law, along with the waiver of all environmental and cultural reviews required by statutory law and by a recent court ruling on an Apache worship and burial site.

Apaches now contemplate the familiar problem of where to turn when the law of the land is twisted into legal fiction. They also face a potentially nightmarish problem of how, when, and where to conduct their religious ceremonies and to rebury their returning relatives. □

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Douglas W. Payne

BETWEEN HOPE AND HISTORY

Mexico's Indians Refuse to Disappear

Earlier this year I stood atop a massive boulder with *El Profe* (The Professor) and other leading citizens of Hueycantenango, a timeworn town set on a bluff high in the Southern Sierra Madre. We looked out over hogbacked ridges, thicketed ravines and the occasional corn patch to a line of gray-green peaks in the distance. El Profe said, "This is our land. Our aim is that someday it will belong to us again."

Hueycantenango means "place of the giant rocks" in Nahuatl. Deep in La Montaña of Guerrero, a state on Mexico's southwestern coast, it is hours from the nearest paved road. Most of the town's thousand or so residents are Nahua Indians, descendants of the Aztecs. So, too, are the outlying villagers, who subsist without the most basic of services amid life-sapping deprivation. A woman in one village, who had lost three of six children to hunger and disease, told me that sometimes the land provided enough food, sometimes not. She raised her eyes to the sky. The rains were still months away.

One of the men of Hueycantenango, who had translated the woman's words from Nahuatl into Spanish, said to me, "Mexico is moving into the first world, that's what he said, *El Pelón*," meaning the bald one, former President Carlos Salinas. "Well, this isn't even the third world."

But the Nahuas of Hueycantenango have a plan. Five centuries after the Spanish Conquest, they are determined to reassert their authority over this remote corner of La Montaña and develop it in ways they think best. Their effort is one small part of a far broader struggle in Mexico for Indian autonomy and respect for indigenous rights.

El Profe is Alejandro Hernández Villarreal, a bilingual teacher at the area's only secondary school and one of the coordinators of an initiative to establish an indigenous-based municipality. A Nahua municipality would for the first time grant a degree of independence to this indigenous community, which has been denied the resources to survive by the municipal government of Chilapa. The Nahua proposal is not about secession. Rather, it is a carefully considered step toward forging a framework for pluralism within existing legal structures.

But rule in Mexico is based on power, not law. Guerrero is divided into seventy-six municipalities and most of them are, like Chilapa, in the shackles of the Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI). The PRI has dominated Mexico through cooptation, corruption, and force since 1929, making it the longest ruling party in the world.

The PRI machine in Guerrero has been controlled by a long line of thuggish governors who grow fat at the trough of Acapulco, the PRI's cash cow in Guerrero, command by hook and crook the loyalty of municipal presidents, and employ the murderous Motorized Police and state Judicial Police to suppress dissent. The system is a pyramid of *caciques* (the Nahua word for village chief, now used to mean "boss"), and it is they who demand their cut of every transaction and who control the relationship between Mexico's Indians and the rest of Mexico.

The proposed Nahua municipality, with Hueycantenango as its seat, would encompass sixty-seven villages spread out over the few hundred square miles that currently constitute the lower half of Chilapa. The community could petition for state funds available to municipali-

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ties and invest in development projects of its own devising—irrigation, sanitation, roads.

Leaders of the new municipality would be chosen and policy made through consensus, in assemblies where everyone speaks before a communal decision is made—no political parties, no secret ballots, no fraud. That was how the initiative was spawned in 1985, nine years before the Zapatista rebellion in the state of Chiapas, four hundred miles to the east, and how El Profe was selected to make the case at the state capital of Chilpancingo.

The PRI has stonewalled the proposal and threatened its proponents. Still, the idea has spread. In the eastern half of Guerrero there are now five other efforts to establish Indian municipalities. All six are coordinated by the Guerrero Council of 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance (CG500ARI), an umbrella organization that brings together the four indigenous groups found in Guerrero—Nahua, Mixteco, Tlapaneco, and Amuzgo. Mexico's Indians are divided into fifty-six language and ethnic groups. The Nahuas are the largest, numbering more than a million and spanning sixteen central Mexican states from the Gulf to the Pacific. The Mixtecs of Guerrero and neighboring Oaxaca number in the hundreds of thousands.

For centuries Mexico's indigenous groups battled separately against land seizures, exploitation, repression, and assimilation. But ethnic insularity and language differences are being overcome and a new spirit of cooperation has developed. This process began in the late 1980s with hemisphere-wide organizing against the Spanish-promoted quincentennial celebration of Columbus's arrival in America, which the indigenous people of Latin America and the Caribbean call the "invasion." And it has been strengthened by a shared sense that in the calculus of today's global economy—among whose minions they identify the white-skinned Mexican power elite—Indians are an excess, expendable population.

The CG500ARI was formed and a leadership council chosen during a series of assemblies in 1991 among the four Indian groups. It took its name from the transnational 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance campaign that culminated with a massive march on Mexico City in October 1992. Delegations from La Montaña trekked for ten days and led the columns from southern states into the Zócalo, the capital's central plaza, on the 12th.

Soon after, they celebrated a rare victory—the government's suspension of a hydroelectric dam project that would have displaced forty to fifty thousand Nahuas from their communities along Guerrero's Upper Balsas River. In the 1960s the communal lands of twenty thousand Mazatecos in Oaxaca had been flooded by a dam. In 1990 the Nahuas of Guerrero issued a declaration: "To remove us from here, first they will have to kill us."

Marcelino Díaz de Jesús (a Nahua) was a principal organizer against the dam. At the tiny CG500ARI office in Chilpancingo he described to me the hunger strikes and the human blockades and motorist pamphleting on the Mexico City–Acapulco highway. "The government said the area was too poor, too unproductive. They said it was better to build a dam, better for national development. For them, we were like nothing. Thousands of indigenous people, our communities, our culture, it was all just supposed to disappear. Well, we refuse to disappear."

Marcelino said they were proud that despite threats and police intimidation there were no lives lost during the two-year struggle. "We mobilize, with great energy, and we make our demands," he said. "But we are against violence."

The demands for democracy, Indian autonomy, and respect for human rights by the ski-masked Mayas of Chiapas galvanized indigenous communities throughout Mexico. Three weeks after the Zapatista rebellion broke out, thousands of Indians marched down the dizzying switchbacks of La Montaña to join a rally in support of "the men and women without faces."

Guerrero authorities were caught off guard. But when the CG500ARI held a third anniversary rally some months later, marchers in Chilpancingo were assaulted by the Motorized Police. "They attacked anyone who looked Indian. Many women and elderly were injured," Amador Cortés Robledo (a Tlapaneco) told me.

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"Now, they've brought in the army," he said. "They say it's to fight drug traffickers. We believe that's just a pretext to intimidate us."

Driving in La Montaña I passed military convoys lurking near small towns. Soldiers in combat gear were stationed along the Sun Highway connecting Acapulco to Mexico City. In Chilapa I asked an officer in command of about two hundred soldiers what their mission was. "National security," he snapped. I asked if that meant counterinsurgency. "There are no insurgents," he said, echoing the Mexican defense ministry line, "only terrorists and criminals."

I had read the rumors of guerrilla activity in the local press, and I remembered a report in the Mexico City daily *El Financiero*, quoting U.S. military intelligence sources, that thousands of AK-47s were stashed in Guerrero. Is the Mexican government trying to cover up an incipient insurgency in Guerrero to keep from spooking foreign investors, as it did in Chiapas? Or is Washington simply lending a hand by inventing a pretext for militarization?

Carlos Salinas sent the army into Guerrero to suppress protests against electoral fraud and to crush labor strikes. Since the Chiapas uprising, Guerrero, with a population of barely three million, has become one of only four Mexican states, all with large indigenous populations, that have two military bases. Another is Oaxaca, where a new helicopter base designed for rapid deployment is nearly completed. The base is part of a sweeping overhaul of Mexico's military and security forces that includes the formation of Green Beret-style units and elite commando teams in each of the country's thirty-six military zones.

The international press has noted killings by Guerrero police, particularly the massacre of seventeen *campesinos* in Coyuca de Benítez near Acapulco in June 1995. But the militarization of Guerrero and other states with high indigenous concentrations has been disregarded. Until the revolt in Chiapas, Mexico's armed forces had been geared against external threats. Now, while President Ernesto Zedillo asserts his commitment to democratic reform at every turn, the new military doctrine identifies the enemy as those Mexicans who have been demanding reform. And although the peso collapse in December 1994 sank Mexico into a devastating depression and left it a ward of the U.S. Treasury and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government pumped up the 1996 military budget by 45 percent.

From Chilapa I drove south to San Luis Acatlán, a municipal seat tucked into the eastern foothills above the coconut plantations along Guerrero's Costa Chica. It is Mixteco country, and dozens of villages have petitioned, like the Nahuas of Hueycantenango, for the formation of a new municipality to be called Mixtecapa.

I was headed for an assembly on Indian rights and civic mobilization organized by the CG500ARI. Along the coast road vehicles were being stopped at Motorized Police checkpoints, the occupants searched and questioned. Indian *campesino* families stood silently along the shoulder. As their belongings were rifled and strewn on the pavement, I wondered about the chances of peaceful Indian movements against a system whose injustices are built into the fabric of Mexican society.

Indians were the trench fighters in the 1910-1917 Revolution. But the overthrow of dictator Porfirio Díaz, whose export-led, market-oriented economic policy was a precursor of the Salinas model, did little to change their status.

Following the revolution, the country's new elites concocted an idea of nationhood that combined an idealized view of the Indian past with the pursuit of the material advantages of modern Spanish civilization. It heralded an emerging mestizo race, what the philosopher of the day José Vasconcelos called *La Raza*, the cosmic race.

But establishing the cosmic race, as envisioned by the mostly white-skinned descendants of the Spanish colonizers, meant that Indians could not be Indians anymore. They would have to be, in effect, recolonized. One of the principal agencies created for that purpose was the National Indigenous Institute (INI).

INI's effort to assimilate Mexico's indigenous people, by teaching them Spanish and introducing them to the ways of "civilization," reinforced the popular image of them as backward people and enhanced discrimination against them, leading to further loss of communal lands

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and exploitation of them as cheap labor. One result, as Mexico embarked on a rush to industrialize, was a vast migration of indigenous peoples to Mexico City and other urban centers where they were crudely integrated into the bottom of the *mestizo* heap. Today, one can hear Nahua, Mixteco, Zapoteco, and other Indian dialects spoken throughout the capital's *ciudades perdidas*, or lost cities, the slums that spread like lava across the volcanic floor of the Valley of Mexico.

Officially, Mexico determines who is an Indian by whether she or he continues to speak an indigenous language. By that reckoning, the 1990 census concluded that about seven million of Mexico's ninety-two million people are Indians. (At least nine out of ten Mexicans have some Indian blood and by U.S. ethnic criteria could claim to be indigenous.)

The official ideal of an egalitarian, mixed-race nation has, like Mexico's laws, little connection with reality. The white-skinned elites, about 9 percent of the population, dominate politics and the economy. White faces provide the models for *mestizo* aspirations, from television to billboards to fashion.

A few years ago I was chatting with a crew of teenaged boys in the lost city of Chimalhuacán out beyond the Mexico City airport. I found that a number of their families were originally from Oaxaca and Guerrero. One of them, his high, bronze cheeks framed by jet-black hair that scrolled down to the face of Jim Morrison silkscreened on his T-shirt, said he wanted to go to the United States. When I asked why, he spread his arms and cried, "Blonde women!" as his compatriots stamped and cheered. At the same time, in Mexico you frequently hear even dark-skinned *mestizos* describe Indians as *feo*, ugly.

In Mexico, Indians are venerated in museums and in the public statuary. Hernán Cortés is a villain and Cuauhtémoc a hero. But ordinary voices tell of a class-based society that keeps Indians at the bottom.

In the 1980s Mexico altered its official policy, declaring that Indians should be integrated into national development, but not at the expense of cultural identity. Little changed, however, as attempts by some well-meaning INI officials to foster cultural preservation were blocked at the state level by PRI governors. Anyway, it was too little, too late. Mexico's Indians were already mobilizing, not just to preserve their culture, but to demand autonomy on their traditional lands. State governments and private armies hired by large landowners responded with force. The repression was most severe in Chiapas.

The assembly in San Luis Acatlán was held in a cavernous, metal-roofed shed. Indian representatives arrived from throughout eastern Guerrero and hundreds of Indian *campesinos* trekked in from neighboring muncipalities. Also present were communal police from outlying villages, a few with old hunting rifles, most with long wooden staffs. "We are chosen in community assemblies, according to tradition," one of them told me. "We must watch over ourselves because the authorities do nothing to defend us from criminals, or they are criminals themselves."

Following their strategy of nonviolent engagement, the CG500ARI had invited the president of San Luis Acatlán municipality, a henchman of then-Governor Rubén Figueroa, and the governor himself. The only response was the arrival of extra police units. Also invited were two federal bodies, the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) and the INI, which did send representatives.

The white-skinned young man from INI counseled Indians to press for legal reforms. He wore his hair shoulder-length and sported a designer T-shirt, an apparent attempt to be seen as a friend of the indigenous. It made him look more like a roadie for the Eagles. He explained that Mexico is signatory to the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, which guarantees against loss of land, displacement, and infrastructure developments detrimental to indigenous interests. True enough. He said the government needed to be pressured to pass the enabling legislation for the guarantees to have the force of law.

The CNDH representative took on the question of Indian municipalities, but in the end ducked the issue by saying it was *muy complejo*, very complicated. The CNDH was established by Salinas in response to international criticism of Mexico's human rights record, but the com-

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mission was given only advisory powers and barred from considering any violations of political or labor rights. The CNDH man concluded by pitching the commission's proposal for elected indigenous councils that theoretically would have a say in economic and social development.

The Indian *campesinos* listened respectfully. Then the floor was opened to questions. A man rose, doffed his weather-beaten straw cowboy hat, and said directly to the INI representative, "What difference does it make if there are new laws? They don't respect the ones that already exist." Every head in the hall nodded in agreement. Another man stood up and said, "We already have elected councils. The government here treats us like we're traitors. But they are the traitors. I want the INI and the CNDH to know there are no rights in this state."

The gathering became increasingly charged as one voice after another challenged the federal representatives to do something about the arbitrary usurpation of land and the killings of indigenous activists. An Indian *campesino* leader from Tlacoachistlahuaca, a district near the Oaxaca border, demanded justice for the unresolved murders of five Mixtecs in June 1995. The killings followed a peaceful takeover of the municipal building to demand recognition for a new indigenous municipality.

There were also denunciations of the PRI's imposition of the neoliberal economic model, as it is called in Latin America, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). One Indian *campesino* received a huge round of applause when he said, "I am not an educated man. But I know this: government after government, we have been betrayed. Now, they are selling Mexican land to foreigners to enrich themselves and who knows what these foreigners will do with us."

In 1992 the Salinas government effectively repealed constitutional Article 27, in a first step toward dismantling the *ejidos*—a communal system based on indigenous traditions that established the right of campesinos to a piece of land—and opening Mexican agriculture to foreign investment. The revival of the *ejido* system was the principal demand of Emiliano Zapata (a Nahua), whose revolutionary call for *tierra y libertad*, land and liberty, was taken up by his namesakes in Chiapas.

Article 27 was never fully implemented, particularly in indigenous regions, and Zapata himself was murdered in 1919 by the new elites of the revolution when he took up arms to renew the fight for agrarian reform. Still, Article 27 remained a hallowed symbol for Mexico's poor farmers and gave them at least a sense that their small plots, which could only be passed on to family members, not sold, were rightfully theirs.

During a break in the assembly many people told me they had been threatened for attending. I learned that bilingual teachers are principal targets of intimidation. The wife of a teacher who backed the proposed Mixtecapa municipality told me that the son of a *mestizo* landowner had asked her if she was prepared to raise her children alone. A young man who headed a Mixteco human rights committee opened a notebook to show me that he had recorded many such complaints.

It is easy to understand why bilingual Indian teachers are at risk. They speak Spanish and have a profession, which in Mexico qualifies them for membership in the *mestizo* class—they do not have to be Indian anymore. Yet increasingly they are choosing to use their skills and experience to empower their indigenous communities, a challenge to *cacique* control.

The assembly produced a resolution that called for renewed mobilization to demand recognition for Indian municipalities and an end to persecution of indigenous activists. It concluded with a march to the local cemetery, closely monitored by the police, to commemorate the twenty-fourth anniversary of the death of Genaro Vásquez. Vásquez was a schoolteacher and civic opposition leader who took up guerrilla warfare in the late 1960s. Although a *mestizo*, he is revered among the indigenous people of La Montaña, where he fought and died. As the throng circled his unmarked grave there were cries of, "*Viva Vásquez! Viva Los Zapatistas!*"

A few of the CG500ARI leaders have some university education. Others, like Cirino Plácido Valerio (a Mixteco), are *campesinos*. I asked Cirino if he thought there was a contradiction between advocating peaceful mobilization and

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celebrating guerrilla fighters.

Cirino pressed his thick hands together and thought for a long time before answering. When you are confronted by an oppressive system, he said, you have three choices. The first is to endure it. "But as you have seen and heard, the people will no longer resign themselves." The second road is civic mobilization. "That is the road we are on. But if that continues to be blocked, there is only one road left to take."

Most indigenous groups in Mexico do not want to take the third road. Even the Zapatistas have said they want to shift from being a guerrilla army to a civic movement. But frustration is mounting, and Mexico's rulers, from the buttoned-down technocrats who talk slick on CNN to the network of hardline "dinosaurs," seem intent on preserving their dominion at whatever cost.

The Zapatista rebellion and the peso's collapse panicked foreign lenders, and "hot money"—security and bond investments that account for up to two-thirds of all investments in Mexico—fled the country. Hot money is what keeps the PRI afloat, and to gain the PRI's readmission to the global casino, the United States and the IMF anted up $48.8 billion. Yet in keeping with bailout canon they lean on the government to impose ever harsher austerity on a desperate population and privately pray it can keep the lid on without too many ugly displays.

In late February the government trumpeted an accord reached with the Zapatistas that guaranteed the rights of Mexico's indigenous peoples. It envisioned some form of limited autonomy but provided few details. The Zapatistas cautioned that it was only the first of six agreements to be worked out and that crucial issues were still pending, including land distribution and the Zapatista demand that the revision of Article 27 be overturned.

Even if a final agreement is reached, there will still be the question of compliance. The history of Mexico is strewn with accords betrayed by its rulers. Before the murder of Zapata, for example, there was Mexico's 1813 Declaration of Independence, which called for the "equality of races" and was followed by a century of Indian enslavement as peons.

The two periods of greatest upheaval in Mexico, the war for independence and the 1910-1917 Revolution, began with Indian-based rebellions. Especially in the latter case Indians revolted against a combination of liberal economic policies and oppression that left them landless, exploited, and so marginalized that they had nothing more to lose. And in each case, the dynamic of rebellion and reaction culminated in sweeping political change. Given the historical parallels, one wonders whether Mexico is about to endure yet a third period of upheaval.

Before I left Mexico there were hints of the accord that would emerge in Chiapas. But in Guerrero this news was as much a source of frustration as hope. An Indian *campesino* from Tlacoachistlahuaca, where the five Mixtecos were murdered last year, spoke for many when he said to me, "The Zapatistas started shooting at the government and now the government talks to them. We ask for negotiations and the government shoots at us. Does that mean we must start shooting, too?" □

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Terence Turner

BRAZIL: INDIGENOUS RIGHTS VS. NEOLIBERALISM

When Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century, the indigenous population of what is now Brazil stood by some estimates at around three million. After five hundred years of epidemics, slave raiding, land expropriation, and more or less forcible cultural assimilation, there are today only around 250,000 people still classified as "Indians" in Brazil. Although this figure amounts to only 2 percent of the national population, territories occupied by indigenous groups cover some 8.5 million square kilometers, or 11 percent of the total area of the country. As in the United States, most of the larger surviving indigenous groups, and all the large indigenous areas, are located in the west. Indigenous people have been largely eliminated from the more heavily settled east.

From colonial times down to the late 1980s, Brazilian policy toward indigenous peoples was frankly assimilationist, based on the twin assumptions that absorption into the Brazilian nation represented evolutionary progress and that social and cultural homogenization was central to the building of a strong Brazilian state. Indigenous societies and cultures, in this perspective, constituted "ethnic cysts to be excised from the body politic," in the words of a general who headed the national Indian agency (FUNAI) during the military dictatorship of 1964-1986. By the mid-twentieth century, Indians and indigenous policy had almost disappeared from popular consciousness and the national political agenda. During the "economic miracle" of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as military rulers pushed the development of the Amazon, Indian communities that found themselves in the way were roughly shouldered aside by government-supported settlers and developers, while the government adopted what amounted to a policy of "benign neglect" toward indigenous groups.

Nineteen sixty-eight, however, was a pivotal year in the Amazon as elsewhere. In that year, sensational reports in the British press about the decline of indigenous populations, inaccurately represented as a concerted policy of government-sponsored "genocide," set off an international outcry that seriously damaged Brazil's foreign relations. The government and people of Brazil discovered, to their surprise and considerable discomfort, that they had an "Indian problem." In those years of repression, "Indian questions" (military censors did not consider them to be political issues) became one of the few topics that could be freely discussed. Ever since, indigenous issues, together with the environmental questions that rose to prominence at the same time, have played a role in Brazilian domestic political discussion and foreign relations out of all proportion to the demographic proportion of Indians in the national population. Indian issues became a rubric under which generic human rights and development-vs.-environment issues could be raised.

This symbolic importance of indigenous issues, from land rights to cultural self-determination, was reinforced through the new alliance of indigenous activism with environmentalism, the great new cause of the 1970s. Many environmentalist nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both foreign and domestic, dedicated themselves not only to defending the ecosystem of the Amazon but also to championing the territorial and human rights of its indigenous inhabitants. The growing political influence of the

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NGOs and more generally of environmentalist and human rights groups coincided with the economic slump of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Both developments helped to relieve the pressure on the environment and the indigenous peoples of the Amazon and other parts of Brazil. The military regime, politically exhausted and unable to cope with the economic decline, ceded power to a civilian government in 1986.

The major political expression of this favorable political moment was the new Federal Constitution of 1988, which for the first time recognized many rights of indigenous peoples, including their right to their own cultural identity and to the territories they have traditionally occupied. Together with these guarantees, the Constitution declared all titles to indigenous lands by nonindigenous parties to be legally null and void. Finally, the Constitution called for the demarcation of all indigenous areas as reserves within five years (that is, by the end of 1993). No serious effort was made to meet this goal, but a number of reserves were in fact created.

Even this modest amount of progress, however, aroused intense opposition among conservative politicians, ranchers, and mining and logging entrepreneurs. Many in the Brazilian military opposed indigenous reserves on the grounds that they would constitute quasi-independent political states that would pose a threat to national security. Military opinion also harbored paranoid suspicions that environmentalist and indigenous support groups were merely fronts for an international conspiracy to steal the Amazon and its resources from Brazil.

Thus it was that rightist politicians and businessmen, in alliance with the military, launched a political and media campaign to roll back the gains made by indigenous peoples. The political pressure to repeal or abolish indigenous reserves, or, failing that, simply to invade and exploit their resources by force, was greatly augmented by the discovery of gold in many of these areas and the intensification of mahogany logging in others.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso won the presidential election in 1994 with the support of rightist elements from the northern states opposed to indigenous rights and territorial reserves. Cardoso's program combines neoliberal economic reforms with cutbacks on government bureaucracy and welfare-state programs. To get it through Congress he needs the support of his northern rightist allies. This has given them the clout they need to gain control over indigenous policy. Their representative in the Cardoso government is Nelson Jobim, the minister of justice. FUNAI is a subdivision of the Ministry of Justice and thus under Jobim's authority. Before becoming minister, Jobim, a lawyer, had put together a brief on behalf of the governor of the Amazonian state of Pará, which argued that the Indian reserves demarcated in that state were unconstitutional, because they had failed to take account of objections from non-Indians whose "interests" were affected. The Supreme Court threw out Jobim's case in 1993. As minister of justice in the Cardoso government, however, Jobim recycled the same argument as the basis of a new presidential decree.

The signing of Decree 1775 by President Cardoso on January 8 of this year marked a drastic reversal of policy toward the protection of the human rights of indigenous peoples and the natural environment. Decree 1775 opens up over half the area of Brazil's demarcated indigenous reserves to claims by private or local state development agencies. The decree makes the minister of justice and the president the sole arbiters of all challenges to indigenous territorial boundaries, insulating their decisions from independent legal review. In effect, the decree and its accompanying ministerial order make up a legal-administrative mechanism for circumventing the Constitution's guarantees of indigenous land rights.

By plunging the legal status of indigenous lands into confusion, the decree has created a climate of uncertainty that is already being exploited by the usual array of unscrupulous speculators and invaders who hope to gain a foothold in indigenous territories; fifteen invasions of indigenous areas have been reported since the decree was signed, some of them accompanied by violence. These economic interests are of the most environmentally and culturally destructive kinds: mining, logging, and ranching. In Brazil, it is mostly in indigenous areas that natural eco-

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systems survive relatively intact. The decree thus potentially poses as grave a threat to environmental diversity as to cultural diversity.

The many legal and constitutional flaws in the new decree have been made the grounds of challenges filed with the Supreme Court of Brazil by several indigenous and pro-indigenous organizations, including the Labor party and COIAB, a coalition of over a hundred indigenous groups with ties to CIMI, the Catholic Church's indigenist missionary council.

Throughout the three-month period allowed by the decree for the submission of contestations of indigenous lands, the minister and the president assured anxious indigenous representatives that only a handful would actually be submitted, affecting at most only a half-dozen areas. When the period expired on April 8, however, over a thousand contestations had in fact been submitted, affecting eighty-three areas, a significant proportion of all the indigenous territory in the country. The quantitative dimensions of this disaster should not obscure the equally important political and ideological function of the decree as the foundational document of a new, neoliberal approach to indigenous rights that the current Brazilian regime is attempting to put in place of the more progressive perspective embodied by the Federal Constitution of 1988. The decree promotes nonindigenous economic interests over the communal interests of indigenous people. Lest anyone miss the economic inspiration for this new turn in Brazilian policy, a statement released by the Ministry of Justice says it all:

> Economic development will determine a flow of capital from east to west, and from south to north [in Brazil] . . . where most indigenous peoples live. Therefore, either for humanitarian or economic reasons, the government had to act urgently to address the issue of Indian lands in a permanent way. □

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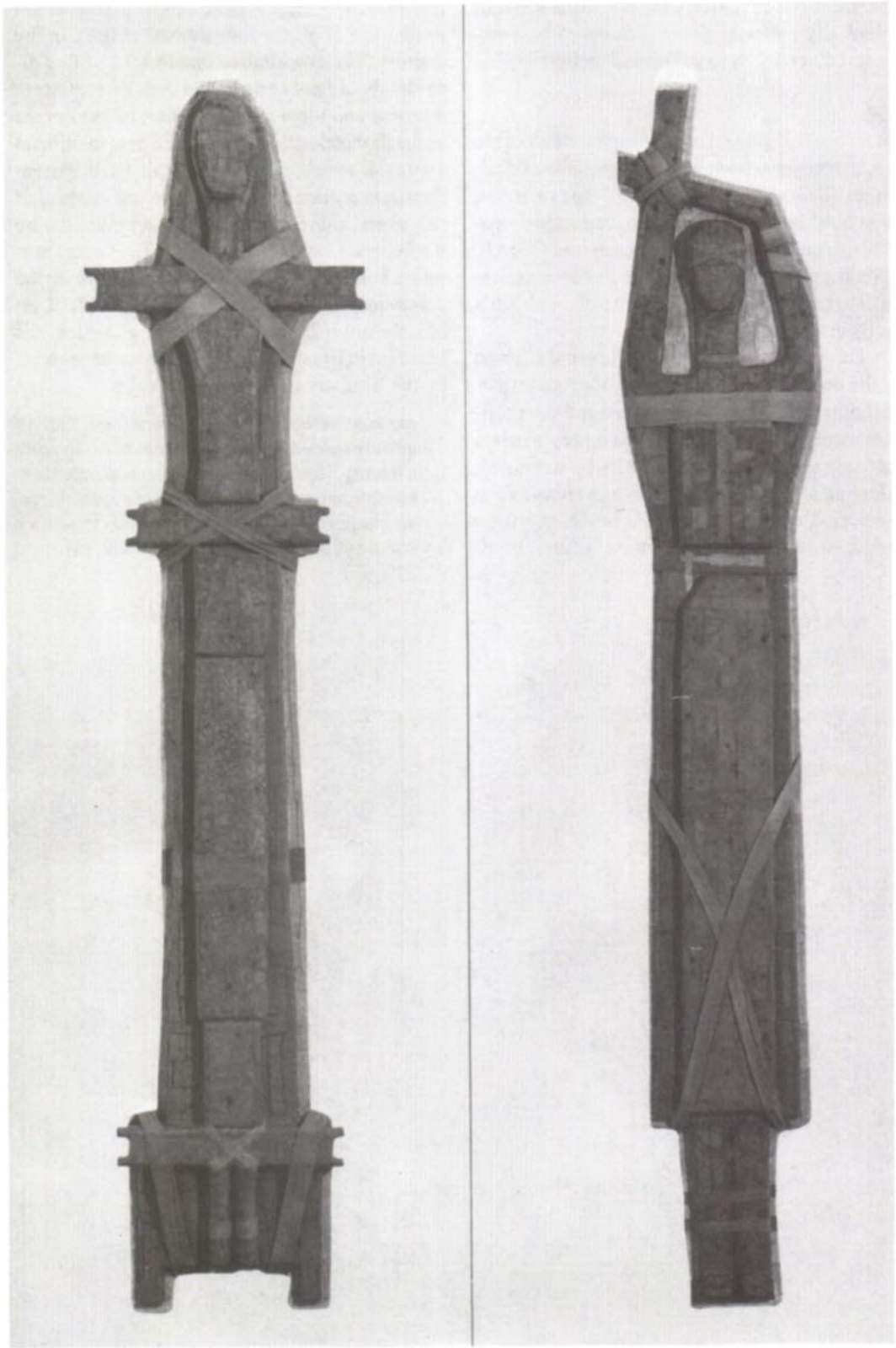

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Terry Golway

HISTORY'S WALLS: NORTHERN IRELAND

Morning comes early to Northern Ireland every July 12. Not long after first light, men in bowler hats leave their flats in Belfast or their little homes in the countryside, some of them wearing great orange sashes that designate them as grandees in the Protestant-only Orange Order. Soon, well-muscled men will begin hoisting impossibly huge drums on their torsos, and soon great banners will be unfurled, bearing such legends as: "No Surrender!" and "Remember 1690!" Young men and women soon will be cheering their elders, waving to the drummers, saluting the banners, and, just to make everything all the merrier, singing songs containing crude references to the Bishop of Rome.

By midday, the parades have begun snaking through the narrow streets of the villages and fine boulevards like Great Victoria Street in Belfast. The line of march is mapped out with all the care and strategy of a military campaign, which is only appropriate, because the parade commemorates a battlefield victory.

The Protestants of Northern Ireland march on this day every year to demonstrate their hegemony over Northern Ireland's Catholics, a dominance seemingly solidifed on July 12, 1690, when the Protestant King of Britain, William III, defeated the Catholic King of Ireland—and formerly of Britain—James II, in a battle near the River Boyne south of Belfast. King Billy, as he is known to the Protestant locals, ensured that the British monarchy and indeed Britain's very soul would continue to be Protestant to the core. And, of course, Northern Ireland's Protestants consider themselves to be British to the core.

Just in case the Catholics don't get the point, many of the parades are routed through the vanquished minority's neighborhoods. It is a demonstration of naked ethnic triumphalism akin to a parade of white supremacists marching through the black neighborhoods of urban America or of the descendants of frontier families marching through the reservations of South Dakota. Catholics in Northern Ireland have known systematic discrimination in housing and employment, and have suffered the everyday scorn of security forces and politicians, but the July 12 parades may well be the ultimate indignity. The day itself is an official government holiday. For Northern Ireland's Catholics, however, it is a day when it is best to be inconspicuous.

But it is becoming increasingly difficult for Catholics to fade into the national woodwork once a year, just as it is increasingly difficult to miss the look of grim desperation in the eyes of the July 12 marchers. From the days when one of the founders of Northern Ireland could describe the province's now-disbanded legislature as "a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people," Northern Ireland in 1996 is teetering on the edge of a demographic, and thus a political, revolution. When Ireland was partitioned seventy-five years ago, Britain's mapmakers saw in the north's six counties a permanent and overwhelmingly Protestant entity, one that would remain happily within the United Kingdom. The minority Catholics—descendants of the native Irish whose land was taken by the Anglo-Protestant colonists—would either leave or would be so repressed that they could hardly interfere with the north's club-like governance. Or so it was thought.

But when the British census of 1991 was published, it confirmed anecdotal evidence that

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something had gone terribly wrong. Far from disappearing, Northern Ireland's Catholic minority is growing to the point where it is possible to imagine a statistical tie with Protestants within a generation, and a majority Catholic province soon after. Catholics, according to recent estimates, make up 43 percent of Northern Ireland's population, up from some 33 percent only a generation ago. There are approximately 645,000 Catholics and 855,000 Protestants in the north. For a tiny ministate whose founding principle was overwhelming Protestant dominance, these figures are a proverbial fire bell in the night.

But the numbers themselves do no justice to the human and sometimes violent drama well underway throughout the province. Not only are Catholics more numerous, some are even prosperous, thanks to the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and the demands for fair employment—fueled in part by Irish-American political activists—in the seventies and eighties. The new Catholic middle classes have even dared to move into traditional Protestant neighborhoods, an unimaginable development twenty years ago and one that has not passed without bloodshed. In a replay of American white flight of a quarter-century ago, Protestants are fleeing their old neighborhoods rather than live side-by-side with their newly empowered fellow citizens.

For example, the once solidly upper-middle-class Protestant stronghold of Malone Road near Queens University in Belfast, a place of quiet, tree-lined streets, now is a neighborhood filled with Catholic middle-class homebuyers, many of them trailblazers in professions once thought of as exclusively Protestant. A more striking sign of the times, however, is in Belfast's Ormeau Road neighborhood, once filled with working-class Protestants, many of them employees of the giant Harland & Wolff shipyards—long a preserve of Protestant working-class privilege. Twin symbols of changing times stand on the Ormeau Road: a Presbyterian church and a lodge of the Orange Order, abandoned and left to rot. The churchgoers and the Orangemen (there are no Orangewomen) have fled to what they believe to be friendlier confines.

Of course, some Protestants are fleeing for reasons other than bigotry. The provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) is back in business after a seventeen-month truce, and so is the more violent Irish National Liberation Army. Although neither group targets people because of their religion, most—though not all—of their victims are Protestant, and often they are ordinary citizens caught in an ancient crossfire. Small wonder they would retreat to what they believe are safer neighborhoods.

Those who remain are left to deal with their own demons. There is another, more terrifying symbol of Northern Ireland's new realities on the Ormeau Road. A betting shop in the neighborhood became an instant killing ground in the early 1990s when a Protestant gunman opened fire, killing five Catholics. The murders, purely sectarian, grew out of Catholic incursions into Protestant turf, but they did not stanch the migratory flow. Belfast, the Protestant rock upon which Northern Ireland was founded, may soon follow the province's second city, Derry, in having a Catholic city council and a Catholic majority.

Northern Ireland's Protestants, as a result, find themselves increasingly pushed into a small corner east of the River Bann, ever closer to Scotland, whence many of them came generations ago. Three of the province's six counties—Derry, Tyrone, and Fermanagh—now have a Catholic majority, and so Catholic is the southern portion of County Armagh that it is known, half-jokingly, as the Republic of South Armagh.

Note the preceding formula, for it is the governing principle of Northern Ireland: to be Catholic is to be an Irish nationalist, or perhaps even a republican. Because South Armagh is Catholic, it is perceived to be nationalist, too, a region separate from the rest of the county based on religion, a distinction that suggests a separate ethnicity and even a hostile national identification.

In the politics and sociology of Northern Ireland, Catholics automatically are assumed to be sympathetic to the cause of a united Ireland, and, whether they are middle-class nationalists or gun-toting republicans, they are thought of as traitorous aliens who function as agents of the Irish Republic—the blood enemy of Northern Ireland's ruling elite. To be a Catholic in North-

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ern Ireland is to be regarded, de facto, as an enemy of the state. Catholics in Northern Ireland are regarded not as fellow citizens of the United Kingdom but as potential terrorists. Many Catholic neighborhoods, particularly poor Catholic neighborhoods, function under virtual military occupation, as journalist Kevin Toolis, author of the book *Rebel Hearts: Journeys Inside the IRA's Soul*, noted. So common is the sight of troops deployed in front yards, with smooth-faced soldiers training their weapons on passers-by, that children hardly notice them anymore. During the IRA's ceasefire, the helicopters were not so omnipresent, the armored cars not so intrusive, but they were redeployed when the truce ended.

Although it is true that British troops also patrol Protestant areas, particularly after Protestant paramilitaries initiated a murder campaign against random Catholics in the early 1990s, the Catholic neighborhoods bear the brunt of the military's surveillance. It is understandable, perhaps, because the IRA is nearly exclusively Catholic. But the IRA, in Toolis's estimation, is no more than a mere six hundred strong. Nevertheless, it is a fact of life in Northern Ireland that the province's hundreds of thousands of Catholics are often thought of as so many suspects awaiting arrest.

Catholics are Irish. Protestants are British. It is a formula as critical to Northern Ireland's way of life as Jim Crow was to the Deep South's a half-century ago. A former prime minister of the province, Basil Brooke, once advised his fellow Protestants "not to employ Roman Catholics, 99 percent of whom are disloyal." Brooke spoke in 1934, but his sentiments live on in the raw and bigoted oratory of the province's chief rabble rouser, Ian Paisley, a Presbyterian minister and politician who was once ejected from a sitting of the European Parliament because he heckled the guest speaker—Pope John Paul II.

An Invisible Minority?

Northern Ireland's Catholic minority would seem downright invisible, at least to untrained eyes. Their accents sound the same, with the down-and-up cadence turning declarative sentences into lyrical interrogatives. Protestants and Catholics are various shades of pale, and, thanks to the province's experience with postindustrialism, even the two groups' neighborhoods look the same, at least in hardscrabble sections of Belfast. Ironically enough, in mainland Britain Northern Ireland's Protestant and Catholics are known by a more-inclusive label: Irish. It is not always rendered as a compliment.

But in their cultural autobiography, the Protestants are fighting an eternal siege against creeping Catholicism, a battle they believe represents the true spirit of their British heritage. By keeping Catholics out of choice public housing developments, out of decent jobs in Belfast's shipyards, and out of political power, the Protestant majority attempted to be true to the province's sectarian founders. Captain Terence O'Neill, a tepid reformer who served as Northern Ireland's prime minister in the 1960s, revealed more than he would have liked when he complained about the attitudes of his fellow Protestants in the late 1960s: "It is frightfully hard to explain to Protestants that if you give Roman Catholics a good job and a good house, they will live like Protestants because they will see neighbors with cars and television sets. They will refuse to have eighteen children. But if a Roman Catholic is jobless and lives in a most ghastly hovel, he will rear eighteen children on National Assistance . . . . If you treat Roman Catholics with due consideration and kindness, they will live like Protestants and in spite of the authoritative nature of their church."

O'Neill, it should be pointed out, was driven from office because he offered concessions to Catholics who were on the march for civil rights. For, as J. Bowyer Bell, author of *The Irish Troubles*, noted: "Every civil rights demonstrator with a banner was a lethal and intolerable threat to be beaten back—not dissuaded with a kindness, not rerouted by logic, but beaten back."

But now there is no turning back, despite the blatant bigotry of some of the local politicians, who see power and privilege slipping from their grasp. When middle-class Catholic politicians convened an eminently respectable forum to discuss Northern Ireland's future a decade ago, a Protestant politician named George Seawright called his Catholic counterparts "scum" and suggested that the "taxpayer's money would be better spent on an incinerator and burning the whole

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lot of them. The priests should be thrown in and burned as well."

As fire and brimstone go, Seawright's rhetoric was over the top, but only slightly. Paisley and his followers regularly condemn Catholics as "idol-worshippers" and worse. But increasingly, theirs is a losing battle.

While Catholics remain underrepresented in the managerial classes and some of the professions, progress—thanks to the courageous actions of young activists in the 1960s—is undeniable. Hiring practices are monitored closely by a Fair Employment Commission, which issues regular reports. Public agencies and private companies with eleven or more employees are required to submit annual reports showing the religious breakdown of their workforce. In 1994, 41.5 percent of public-sector job-seekers were Catholics, as were 41.1 percent of those hired. In the private sector, in companies employing more than 250 people, Catholics made up 43 percent of jobseekers and 44 percent of those hired. When smaller companies are counted and statistics broken down by gender, Catholics make up 35 percent of employed men and 39 percent of employed women.

Journalist and author Jack Holland, a Belfast native who now lives in Brooklyn, said the signs of Catholic advances are everywhere. But, he added, so are the signs of Catholics being left behind.

The Falls Road area of Belfast is within easy walking distance of Malone Road and its little gardens. But the Falls is another world, one of desperate unemployment and drab flats. In some portions of the Falls, unemployment is said to run well over 50 percent. Not surprisingly, Sinn Fein has an office on the Falls, and the British troops patrol the area with extra caution. While the Catholics who have made the leap to the middle class may have reason to believe the system, however flawed, can work, the unemployed and hopeless Catholics of the Falls have no such hopes. If their eyes look south to the Irish Republic for relief, it has less to do with religion and more to do with economic desperation. Northern Ireland has given them nothing except, as O'Neill said with such contempt, National Assistance.

Ironically, if poor Catholics had reason to look closer at the place they call home, they would discover that their Protestant neighbors in the adjacent Shankill neighborhood are nearly as desperate. Although Protestantism still has its privileges, they are becoming lost on the Protestant working classes. Religion has not shielded them, as promised, from the hammer blows of postindustrialism and global competition. The Shankill and Sandy Row, both exclusively Protestant, working-class neighborhoods, have begun to take on the look of communities in decline.

A huge fence separates the Falls Road and the Shankill. But the real barrier is history. However much the poor Catholic of the Falls has in common with the poor Protestant of the Shankill, the marchers of July 12 serve as a reminder of everything that has divided them.

As revolution proceeds, birth by birth, in Northern Ireland, politics inevitably will change with it. The question is not whether a Catholic Northern Ireland will be reunited with the Irish Republic, but whether a changed Northern Ireland will tear down history's walls. □

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Sami Naïr

FRANCE: A CRISIS OF INTEGRATION

Since the mid-1970s, signs of Balkanization have arisen in France. Xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism are becoming more common, and the country's tradition of *laïcité* (secularism)—the radical separation of the state from all forms of religion—has been confronted with a revival of religious identities. The French republican model, with its twin universalist and assimilationist goals, appears more and more on the defensive. This is the context in which France has been debating immigration.

From 1974, when legal immigration was officially halted, to the present, mainstream political rhetoric has referred to immigration as a "problem." The influx of newcomers, it is claimed, threatens the traditional French model. For some people on the left, the very idea of "assimilating" immigrants is repugnant because it is reminiscent of an outmoded "Jacobin" worldview tainted with colonialism. For others, mostly on the right, assimilation is impossible because immigrants, especially Muslims, are bearers of mores and beliefs that are deemed to be incompatible with the French tradition. While both sides agree on the need to block new immigration, the left, when it was in power, developed strategies that favored integration of those already legally established, whereas the right has been determined to "get tough" with immigrants in general, even at the risk of disrupting the lives of legal residents.

Social Integration and Cultural Assimilation

Integration via assimilation has been France's response to foreign minorities since the nineteenth century. Prejudice and conflict have often reared their heads, but in the end, assimilation has almost always been successful, and newcomers have been transformed into French citizens. The term assimilation may have a negative connotation for those who think all ethnic groups must necessarily form their own distinct communities within the broader society, with special rights of collective self-expression. In the French context, however, assimilation does not mean forgoing one's religion, ethnic identity, or language. Rather, it defines *public* behavior, without precluding expressions of cultural singularity within the private sphere. Assimilation implies rights—especially equality before the law—and obligations, such as loyalty to the French state. It is true, of course, that even in the private sphere, individuals face social pressures to conform to the dominant cultural model. Life is certainly easier for a citizen named Jean Dupont than for one named Mohamed Sidi Mohamed. But no law requires Mr. Mohamed to relinquish his cultural attachments. The main point is that social integration makes possible cultural assimilation and the latter, in turn, aims to reinforce citizenship.

All this is jeopardized, however, if the system's capacity for socioeconomic integration is stymied. But political rhetoric, sometimes quite vicious, about the "immigrant problem" is rarely accompanied by any coolheaded consideration of, say, the labor market; it is more often a simple function of party politics and opportunism. It is perfectly legitimate for France to reduce immigration, while aiming to assimilate migrants who are already legally established. But the fact is that since the 1980s politicians have presented

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immigration as a "threat," a key social problem in itself. Why is this the case? The most basic reason is that the question of immigration has starkly revealed the overall crisis of social integration that affects ever broader sectors of the French working population.

With this in mind, we can divide the immigration debate into three major periods:

The "Immigration Question" Emerges (1974-1981)

During this period, the French socioeconomic system, confronted with globalization and constraints imposed by the growing power of the European Community, underwent decisive changes. The postwar compromise between capital and state went into crisis, with growing structural unemployment, de-industrialization, the destabilization of established social institutions, together with an increasing presence of women in the workplace and the spread of insecure forms of employment.

Instead of confronting these changes head on, French elites focused first on the margins of the system—that is, on those who were not perceived as a "natural" part of it. The borders were closed, for immigrants were accused of taking jobs away from native-born citizens. Then-president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing asserted that immigrants—those from North Africa in particular—were "unassimilable" because they were too different culturally. Best for them to "go back home." (Later, in 1981, Giscard denounced their "invasion" of France.) There was, indeed, a real problem, as I have indicated—that of immigration in the context of a shrinking labor market. But Giscard's response—and his very language—only created more obstacles to its resolution.

During the same period, immigrants started becoming more self-conscious about their situation. Since the idea of returning to their native country was neither a real nor a desirable option for most—and even though the government paid a few thousand to do so—their real issue was how to stabilize their circumstances in France. Their children, born on French soil, were already legally French. But a dynamic had been set in motion by which immigrants were defined repeatedly as being outside the system. This happened just when a cycle of massive layoffs began to affect French workers.

Integration with "Closure" (1981-1993)

Between 1981 and 1993, the situation changed completely. The left won the presidential and legislative elections of 1981 with promises to combat unemployment, but also to integrate legal immigrants and to protect their rights. A system of permanent and renewable residency permits was created for legal immigrants; new rules for "family reunification" made it much easier to bring a spouse or children into the country. The Socialist-led government also sought to improve the situation in the *banlieues* (outlying urban areas) where many immigrants live. Still, the government kept the door shut to further immigration. Its strategy might be called "integration with closure." It was put forward initially within the broader framework of candidate François Mitterrand's proposals for workers.

As a result, France was one of the very few countries in Europe whose foreign population actually declined during the 1980s, from 3.7 million in 1982 (6.8 percent of the total French population) to just under 3.4 million in 1990 (6.4 percent). In 1992, of the 110,000 immigrants who were authorized to enter France, over half were family members of persons already legally established in the country.

In the larger picture, however, the left failed to fulfill its program. There were three reasons why: the government's conversion to a neoliberalism that was incapable of dealing with the crisis of social integration; the use of anti-immigrant racism as a political resource by parties of the right and far right; and finally, the fact that many immigrants, having begun to define their life horizons within French society, also started posing the problem of their religious identity, thereby raising the question of Islam's place within the secular French republic.

Shortly after coming to power in 1981, the left was confronted by a wave of neoliberalism sweeping across Europe. To repel it, France would have had to break altogether from the process of European integration. From 1983 on, the French left chose Europe and adaptation to

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neoliberalism, abandoning its original left-Keynesianism. The struggle against inflation and the defense of a strong franc left it impotent in the struggle against unemployment. Broad sectors of the French working classes and even middle strata found their jobs increasingly insecure, and soon more radical forms of exclusion appeared, aimed especially at immigrants. The *banlieues*, besieged by high unemployment, became social powder-kegs. The Socialist-led government, though it helped to legitimate the presence of immigrants in French society by insisting on the recognition of both their rights and their obligations, failed in its mission to solve the broader socioeconomic problem.

Starting in 1983, the right began to transform the social integration of immigrants into a "cultural" question; they thereby initiated a debate on French national identity. "Who is French?" became the question of the day. The mainstream ("classic") right, egged on by the demagogy of the National Front, proposed a major reform of the Nationality Code: the abandonment of the *droit du sol* (the principle of granting citizenship to all those born on French soil). This idea received some backing in intellectual circles, too. The right came to power again between 1986 and 1988 but did not have time to implement this idea.

With the second victory of the left in 1988, there was a return to the *status quo ante*. The *droit du sol* was maintained. Economic support to depressed urban areas was reaffirmed, although it involved more media hype than substantive measures. At the same time, the struggle against illegal immigration intensified, and new obstacles were placed in the way of family reunification.

While immigration increasingly became part of the general problem of social integration, it also unquestionably raised real issues of identity, for the immigrants and for French society as a whole. For the third time in France's history, its Catholic majority faced a population of a different religion. Once it had been Protestants and then the Jews; now it was Muslims entering—or trying to enter—the French melting pot. In the two earlier cases, integration entailed many difficulties—one need only recall the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre and the Dreyfus affair. Catholic France, whether under the monarchy or under the republic, has displayed a stubborn resistance toward non-Catholics. Moreover, France has an additional bone of contention with Islam, rooted in the colonization and decolonization of North Africa. Fully integrating Algeria into France would have brought about a long-term demographic change: the Arab and Berber populations would have become a significant portion of the French nation. Only Algeria's independence resolved this matter.

The question today is different because it is internal: it concerns a Muslim minority that is destined, like the Protestants and the Jews before them, to assimilate into the French cultural mold. Hence the aggravated worries about French identity. But political elites, far from adopting a firm pedagogical orientation based on respect for the rights of persons, have only accentuated the malaise by promulgating repressive laws.

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Exclusion as Policy (1993 to the Present)

A third period opened in 1993 when neo-Gaullist Interior Minister Charles Pasqua proposed a set of new laws. These were part of a broader policy aimed at undermining the status that foreign and immigrant workers have had since World War II. The first of the three Pasqua laws partly undoes the *droit du sol*: children born to immigrants in France now must officially declare their desire to be French citizens. The second law eliminates French constitutional obligations to grant asylum. The third does away with the right of immigrants to obtain a residency permit after fifteen years in the country; this applies as well to the spouses of foreigners and their children if they entered France before the age of ten. Obviously, these severe conditions make family reunification more difficult. And a broader chill has accompanied these measures. "Mixed" marriages (between a French citizen and a foreigner) are regarded by officials with suspicion, and those who "look" like "foreigners" are increasingly liable to be checked for identity papers in the street. Exclusion, not integration, is now the heart of the agenda.

The current minister of the interior, Jean-Louis Debré, has further radicalized the situation with a bill that even Pasqua finds alarming. It calls on the government to keep files on anyone who houses foreigners and empowers the government to confiscate the passports of asylum-seekers and foreigners whose situation is judged "irregular." The bill enables prefects (regional representatives of the central authorities) to expel foreigners, something only the minister of the interior could do up to now. Finally, long-term (ten-year) residency permits can be denied to anyone who has committed petty offenses, including "disturbing the peace," no matter how long ago.

The targets of this proposed legislation are *legal* immigrants, not those who have entered the country in a clandestine manner. There has been nothing quite like it since the Vichy government's laws against Jews in 1940. No wonder that the eminent legal scholar Christian Bruschi has denounced this legislation as "xenophobic." The mainstream right that governs France today has adopted some of the extreme right's values and does not appear to have measured the consequences of this choice. □

My thanks to James Cohen for his help in writing this article. Any weaknesses are, of course, my own.

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Claus Leggewie

HOW TURKS BECAME KURDS, NOT GERMANS

Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, takes place at the beginning of spring, when the dark season is past. To the German police it is a red-alert day. Even though most of the Kurds living in Germany celebrate peacefully or not at all, in the last few years it has become the occasion of violent clashes with the police. But other incidents, too, are causing increasing uneasiness in German public life: in 1995, 230 arson attempts were made on Turkish travel agencies, banks, and stores; Kurd militants occupied consulates and set up blockades, and Kurd "martyrs" went on hunger strikes and set themselves on fire. The German government has begun to consider laws that will allow immediate extradition to Turkey of Kurds who perpetrate violence. Germany's President Herzog recently expressed his determination to prevent the civil war in Turkey from spilling over into Germany, and he was speaking for the German people. The surprising electoral success of the anti-foreigner Republikaner party in the state elections in March 1996 can be attributed to these occurrences, among other factors.

But the conflict is more than the "export" of a civil war. To be sure, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), a Stalinist sect and guerrilla movement founded in 1978, has identified Germany as a "second front" now that the Turkish government is pursuing a "military solution" to the problem. But the conflict also mirrors the ethnic division of the roughly two million people from Turkey living in Germany into Turks and Kurds. Germany has unwillingly become a multicultural society. Here the lines run not only between the native majority and immigrant minorities, but further between different minorities whose relations are marked by acute conflicts.

Until recently, Germans have tended to lump together all immigrants as Turks; the so-called foreigner problem is seen as a "Turkish problem." Yet since the 1970s the group of immigrants from Turkey has become more diverse. In the early years, this group consisted mostly of unskilled young men. Later their families joined them, and now it includes all ages from the day-care center to the retirement home, a large number of unemployed, and also a prosperous middle class.

This heterogeneity is being enriched by a significant ethnic difference: there have always been Kurds among the Turkish "guest workers" and refugees, but most of them did not discover their "Kurdishness" until they came to Europe. The Turkish state has stubbornly refused to recognize the special ethnic, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of the minority from the southeastern part of the country, the so-called Mountain Turks. The German state has refused with equal stubbornness to grant the immigrants citizenship. In the face of these barriers, Kurdish nationalism has sprung up in Germany. In other words, Turks have become Kurds because the Turkish state denies them cultural recognition and the German state denies them political recognition.

The Kurdish Question

To understand this remarkable metamorphosis, we must look briefly at the history of the Kurdish people. The territory they inhabit is spread over three different countries: Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. Kurdish minorities also live in Syria and in the former Soviet republic of Armenia. The number of Kurds in the Middle East is currently estimated

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at twenty to twenty-five million. They thus constitute the largest people in the world without a state of its own. The growth after 1989 of ethnically based states has not altered this situation; rather, the circumstances of the Kurds in these countries have actually worsened since then. There is no reason to anticipate that the demands for Kurdish autonomy will be fulfilled in the foreseeable future. The almost total failure of the Kurdish nationalist movement can be attributed on the one hand to its splintering into a multitude of hostile tribes and on the other hand to the exposed situation of "Kurdistan" in an area where geopolitical conflict has been rife for a thousand years.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish feudal overlords enjoyed a relatively large degree of freedom, as long as they paid tribute and provided soldiers. In a multi-ethnic empire it is quite easy to practice tolerance toward cultural and religious differences. With the collapse of the empire, with its multitude of nationalities, it became crucial to bring ethnic identity and political unity into harmony. Ottoman became identical with Turkish, while Greeks, Bulgarians, and even the Bosnians achieved political and cultural independence. But the fall of the Ottoman Empire did not bring autonomy, for the Kurds' protonationalist movements were too weak, and especially because the Kurds could not count on the protection of the colonial powers with dominant positions in the Middle East.

Thus Kurdish diasporas came into being on the soil of the collapsed empire. From then on, Turkish nationalism, but also the regimes in Syria, Iran, and Iraq, trampled on the Kurds' strivings for independence and autonomy. The Kurdish rebellions were put down with the support of the British and French colonial powers. This persecution continued into the 1970s, and after a brief phase of liberalization from 1975 to 1978, Ankara once more played the military card. Today Turkey is waging what amounts to a war, with brutal purges and pacification operations, in Kurdistan. The situation of the Kurds in the neighboring countries of Iraq and Iran has been only apparently more favorable. There the Kurds were granted a certain degree of political and cultural autonomy, yet they have been tossed back and forth between the two countries, and likewise suffered bloody repression. The Kurdish nationalist movement has not united in these countries; nor has it engaged in a project transcending national boundaries.

Because Kurds cannot derive their identity from residence in a national state, they must define themselves in ethnic and cultural terms. Yet it is difficult to achieve unity among the different elements of the Kurdish people. Origins, language, religion, social position, and customs, the usual attributes of ethnic groups and communities, are unclear and heterogeneous. The origins of the Kurds are shrouded in darkness. Islamization, Arabization, Turkization have made it almost impossible to construct a Kurdish myth of origins. In addition, the Kurdish language has not developed consistently. The different branches of the language have diverged so far that communication has become difficult among the Kurds themselves. Repressive forced assimilation in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq makes it almost impossible to develop a Kurdish national language. The religion common to almost all Kurds, Islam, is not a homogenizing factor, either. For one thing, the Kurds share their membership in the Islamic world community with the majorities that oppress them; for another, the familiar schism between Sunni, Shi'ite, and Alevite Muslims can also be found among the Kurds.

Kurdish intellectuals have been persecuted and driven into exile, and the bourgeois middle class has distanced itself from the rural leadership. In summary, one may say that the Kurds' sense of commonality derives principally from their common persecution and banishment.

This "community of fate" is further limited by the Kurds' focus on improving their situation or achieving independence in the individual national states. Their interest in the entire Kurdistan region is largely rhetorical. That explains the readiness of Kurdish groups to enter into alliances with opponents of other Kurdish groups. The center of Kurdish nationalism has meanwhile shifted from Iraq to Turkey. Between 1961 and 1969 the Iraqi Kurds under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani attempted to secure autonomy by military means. The regime in Baghdad reacted with an annihilating campaign of repres-

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sion. This campaign achieved catastrophic proportions during the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. The Kurds were encouraged and then dropped by both the Iranians and the Americans, and Saddam Hussein took revenge on the "traitors" with poison gas attacks in 1987-1988 (the worst event was the Halabja massacre in March 1987) and with the expulsion of two to three million Kurds in 1991. The Iraqi Kurds can survive today only in the UN protection zone in northern Iraq.

This regionalization of the conflict transformed NATO-member Turkey and this neighboring region into the core of Kurdish nationalism. Between 1975 and 1978 prospects there seemed more favorable to Kurdish cultural autonomy. Publications in the Kurdish language were allowed, and the "Kurdish question" was discussed more openly. But this liberalization was short-lived. Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, a Social Democrat, took vigorous steps against the Kurds, and the military regime that seized power in 1980 put a permanent end to the thaw, making even private use of the Kurdish language a crime. Under this extreme pressure, Kurdish nationalism in Turkey became increasingly radical. In 1978 the PKK was founded, led by Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan, and in 1984 it launched operations that led to Turkish military repression and to the depopulation of entire regions in Kurdistan. The more recent civilian governments of Turgut Ozal and Tansu Ciller remained committed to stamping out "Kurdish terrorism." In the meantime, Turkish liberals and others have raised protests. But expression of pro-Kurd sentiment still falls under the "criminal opinions paragraph" of the Turkish anti-terrorism law. This stubborn suppression of moderate Kurdish positions merely serves to confirm the PKK's claim to be the sole representative of the Kurdish cause at home and abroad. At the same time, the conflict in southeast Anatolia functioned as a catalyst, strengthening the Islamicist opposition and the Refah party, which today constitutes the most powerful political force in Turkey and calls into question the entire republican, secularized structure of the Kemalist state.

In brief, the Kurdish question reveals five fissures in Turkish society: the transition from a traditional to a modern society, the gap between the center and the periphery, the conflict between Islam and secularism, the contradiction between ethnic particularism and republicanism, and the wavering between the authoritarian state and a civilian society.

The internal Turkish conflict has also become international: a steady stream of refugees, military assistance to Turkey from the NATO countries, and the presence of the PKK in European countries—this has embroiled European governments in Turkish affairs. Since the Gulf War, the Kurdish conflict has become a component of the Middle East conflict. Turkey is wavering between East and West. Primarily because the countries of the European Union have given Turkey the cold shoulder, "Greater Turkey" as well as fundamentalist movements are leaning toward becoming part of the Islamic world community and focusing Turkish regional ambitions on Central Asia.

Exiled in Germany

A large segment of the Kurdish people lives in exile, mostly in Europe, and the lion's share in Germany. The precise number is unclear, because, except in Sweden, Kurdish workers and refugees are registered as Turkish citizens. The German example offers the best explanation of how a separate Kurdish community in exile has come into being. When the mass emigration of workers from the Mediterranean countries to northern Europe began in 1961, only seven thousand Turkish citizens were living in Germany. By far the majority of the Kurds living in the Federal Republic of Germany came from Iraq and Iran and were intellectuals or students and business people. By the end of the mass importation of "guest workers," a good nine hundred thousand Turkish citizens had settled in Germany. Very few of them called themselves Kurds. The motivation for their emigration (conceived of as temporary) was purely economic. It took on political overtones in 1980 when a state of emergency was declared in Turkey. Those expelled from the war zone sought asylum in Europe, among them dedicated proponents of Kurdish separatism. The opportunity to discuss the Kurdish question openly in Germany paved the way for many Turkish citizens to discover their

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Kurdish identity and declare it without fear. Some estimates suggest that as many as six hundred thousand Kurds are living in Germany today.

Most of the Kurds did not come directly to Germany from Kurdish regions but by way of Turkish cities and emigration centers. They now live primarily in the areas where Turks are heavily concentrated. The Kurds share a great deal with the Turks—social and professional status, family structure, religious practice, and subordinate legal status as "foreigners" (including in the second and third generation). They likewise have shared in the process of differentiation between the first generation of guest workers, untrained manual workers with rural backgrounds, and the next generation, which created a middle class by acquiring professional training. The German majority takes no cognizance of such differences, viewing these foreigners across the board as "Turks," the least respected group in Germany and the subject of frequent discrimination in everyday life, as well as violent racist attacks by members of the radical right. Kurds continue to be seen as part of the "Turkish problem" and treated accordingly.

To those immigrants who explicitly consider themselves Kurds, the experience of emigration—which includes homesickness but also prosperity and the enjoyment of cultural freedom and certain civil rights—means something quite different from what it means to other Turkish citizens. For the rest of the Turks, developing a special identity distinct from the German majority depends more on accentuating religious practices. Yet as a rule Kurds do not stand out sharply from the rest of the Turkish citizens in Germany.

Opposition between Kurds and Turks becomes acute as a result of the politicization of ethnic conflict in Turkey, which forces even emigrants to take sides. The PKK does what it can to radicalize the ethnic contrast. With its sectarian, Maoist guerrilla ideology, the PKK represents only a small percentage of Kurdish immigrants. Yet it has succeeded in making itself the loudest voice of the Kurdish people, seizing the lead from the intellectuals in exile and the ethnic self-help groups.

The pro-Kurd orientation of a segment of the German population, particularly West German leftists, plays a key role here. Against the background of brutal repression of Kurds in Turkey and in view of the fact that Turkey is anything but a model democracy, Kurdish ethno-nationalism has evoked more sympathy than Turkey's attempts to defend itself against radical separatists and protect the integrity of the Turkish nation-state. As a result, the German government came under pressure to reconsider its support for Turkey's war against the Kurds. At the same time, solidarity with the Kurds dictated that more leeway be given to the Kurdish language and traditions in German schools and other public institutions. The Turkish government saw this criticism as interference in its internal affairs, part of a campaign directed against Turkey. The Turkish immigrants, of whom some are distinctly critical of the repression of Kurdistan, made so much of this solidarity that the West German public tended to pay more attention to the Kurds' striving for independence than to the discrimination Kurds were experiencing at German hands. Attempts to preserve a dialogue between Kurds and Turks still predominate. But a certain percentage of German Turks have adopted the anti-Kurdish stance that the Turkish-language media in Germany are promoting.

This drawing of battle lines has intensified since the PKK began to resort to violence in Turkey and Germany. There is also a (well-founded) suspicion that the German government, despite the 1993 ban on the PKK, has entered into a sort of silent agreement with its leader, Ocalan, probably taking him for a sort of second Yasir Arafat and intending not to be caught unprepared if the Kurds should gain their independence in the future. That does nothing to change the fact that most Kurds feel victimized by German domestic and foreign policy. The PKK, which has infiltrated a number of Kurdish exile associations, exploits this perception. It demands radicalization of the Kurdish emigrants, whose attention in the last few years has been directed more toward conditions in Turkey and an independent Kurdistan than toward the improvement of living conditions in Germany. Data from the German police indicate that the PKK today has nine thousand activists and fifty thousand sympathizers in Germany. It is not organized as a

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party but as a secret society, exerting iron control over hundreds of local cells and ruthlessly extorting protection money. The measures taken by the German police and courts against the PKK have thus far proved ineffective. They are limited for the most part to persecution of persons who display PKK symbols and pictures of Ocalan, while the crimes ascribed to the PKK (such as execution-style killings of "defectors" and "traitors") usually go unpunished. The German courts and administrative bodies face a dilemma: on the one hand they are criticized if they extradite Kurds to Turkey, where they will without question be in danger; on the other hand, they are criticized when proponents of PKK violence exploit the protections afforded by Germany's liberal asylum laws. Germany and NATO face the conflicting demands of practical political interests, which call for tying Turkey closely to the West, and humanitarian considerations, which call for maintaining a liberal asylum policy and bringing pressure to bear on Turkey.

Consequences

Thus the Turkish-Kurdish difference has taken on a dramatic dimension. The case of the Kurds in Germany provides a perfect example of how refusal to acknowledge cultural differences and to achieve a federalist resolution of ethnic tensions can lead to civil war and international conflict. The PKK leadership recently announced its intention to escalate the conflict. It is threatening to attack German tourists in Turkey and to intensify terrorist operations in Germany, for instance in the form of car bombings and assassinations. It may be that Ocalan wants to blackmail the new Turkish government into adopting a more conciliatory attitude. But even to achieve that, he is literally willing to walk over dead bodies. Unless the reformist forces among the Kurds, who are working for an independence based not on military might but on the establishment of a federally structured political and cultural autonomy of the Kurds in Turkey, can gain the upper hand over the PKK, any solution to the Kurdish question seems more remote than ever.

Translated from the German by KRISHNA WINSTON □

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André Liebich

GETTING BETTER, GETTING WORSE

Minorities in East Central Europe

Why won't the minority issue in East Central Europe go away? By 1914 more than half the people in the area belonged to minorities. By the interwar period the proportion had gone down to one-quarter. Since 1945 minorities have never accounted for more than 10 percent of the population, even according to the most extravagant figures. Two of the most prominent minorities, the Jews and the Germans, have virtually disappeared. And the homogenizing effects of modern communications and technology would suggest that the future belongs to the forces of assimilation.

Such considerations, reinforced by communists' assurances that their regimes had "solved the national question," lulled Western policy makers into believing that minority issues belonged to the past. This was patently untrue, but not until the revolutions of 1989, with the freeing of the press and the opening of borders, did the minority issue come to the fore. At this point, Western policy makers, now prodded by a horde of recycled security specialists, began to give credence to the most alarmist pronouncements.

The minority issue in East Central Europe today is neither as benign as it seemed a few years ago nor as catastrophic as it is now often described. With the tragic exception of the former Yugoslavia, minority disputes no longer provoke armed conflict among states here nor do they cause bloodshed on any significant scale. The issue is important, however, because treatment of minorities is the touchstone of democratic progress. Recognizing this, regional organizations, notably the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have attempted to devise minority protection principles. The difficulties these efforts have encountered derive from the discrepancy between the European organizations' will to uniformity and the overwhelming heterogeneity of local minority situations. Like Tolstoy's families, in East Central Europe each minority is unhappy in its own way.

On the face of it, some East European states should have no minority problem at all. In the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary, minorities number less than 10 percent of the population. Even in these countries, however, the weight of minorities exceeds their number.

After its split with Slovakia, the new Czech Republic established a citizenship law that effectively excluded many individuals from citizenship. In particular it affected ten thousand to twenty-five thousand Roma (popularly called Gypsies), thus bringing to international attention the existence of a minority, socially deprived but nationally defined, whose number may be as high as two hundred thousand or 2 percent of the population. Amendments to the citizenship law carried out under international pressure have been judged inadequate by the Council of Europe and the U.S. government. Even more disturbing than the citizenship law or the many recorded cases of petty discrimination against Roma, however, is the general consensus within Czech public opinion that the outside world simply cannot understand what most Czechs consider a problem of public order.

Less visible but even more numerous than the Roma are the Czech Republic's three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Slovaks. Given the similarity of language and culture, Slovaks are prime candidates for assimilation.

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At present they function as an interest group, occasionally protesting that they are not recognized as a national minority. An even more unwelcome reminder of the past is a minute German minority. This pitiful remnant of Bohemia's history highlights the fact that the Czech-German past has not been buried. Disputes over restitution—for Czech suffering during World War II and for the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia afterward—bedevil relations between Bonn and Prague; they echo in matters as tangential as the recent dismissal of a German conductor from the Prague Symphony.

Poland has become an overwhelmingly monoethnic state for the first time in its history. The extermination of Polish Jewry, the loss of prewar Poland's Ukrainian and Belorussian Eastern borderlands, and the expulsion of Germans from territories attributed to Poland after World War II have reduced the minority population from more than 30 percent to less than 4 percent. This still encompasses over a million people.

Poles are curious about their minorities, whether on a trivial level, as in a fashion for kosher restaurants, or, more ominously, in attitudes of suspicion that gave an ugly anti-Semitic undertone to the first postcommunist presidential elections. Even benevolent attitudes provide no guarantee of tolerance. The fact that there are fewer than twelve thousand pupils in minority schools throughout the country no longer reflects official prejudice or fears of persecution. It underscores the steamrolling effect that a nationalistic and numerically dominant society exercises on its weak and disorganized minorities.

Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities, each numbering between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand, share a history of subordination in Poland. Ukrainians are more politically conscious and can make common cause over the issue of restitution for their expulsion from Poland's southeast corner after the war; they are geographically scattered, however, which reduces their effectiveness. Belorussians are concentrated around the area of Bialystok in Eastern Poland. Their organizations control some local councils but have no impact on the national level, in part because their area is among Poland's poorest and least-developed. To everyone's surprise and relief, Warsaw's relations with independent Ukraine are harmonious.

Germans constitute the most prominent Polish minority. Their number, with estimates ranging from one hundred thousand to a million, is difficult to establish, in part because the Polish and German governments disagree on who qualifies as a German. German minority organizations, concentrated in Silesia, have done well, even winning five parliamentary seats, and they have consistently enjoyed Bonn's support. Tensions rose when local German minority leaders appealed directly to Bonn to open a consulate in Katowice, without consulting Warsaw. They resurfaced when Polish authorities took down German-language road signs in German minority areas, although these were later restored in accordance with Council of Europe norms. An underlying source of conflict is the question of territoriality. German minority leaders dream of obtaining some form of autonomy for Silesia, perhaps with a view to creating a Euroregion transcending Poland's borders. Such thoughts are anathema to Poland's leaders who, like their counterparts in the region, are viscerally attached to a unitary state.

Hungary, also a recently homogeneous state, stands out for its generous treatment of minorities. Collective minority rights, cultural autonomy, preservation of ethnic identity, affirmative action, and subsidies to minority organizations are official policies. Skeptics, however, question both the significance and the motivation of these policies. Official minorities are small; Slovaks, South Slavs, Germans, and Romanians together may number just over one hundred thousand or about 1 percent of the population. Jews, more numerous in Hungary than anywhere else in East Central Europe (figures go up to one hundred thousand), are divided among themselves as to whether they wish to be considered a national minority. Above all, Roma, whose number may reach a million, barely appear in statistics because a large majority speaks only or mainly Hungarian. The self-governing minority institutions, created on the basis of a law that took two years to prepare, have aroused

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so little interest that barely 2 percent of those eligible to vote for them have done so.

Suspicion of Hungarian policies is founded on the Hungarian attitude toward its own minorities abroad. The Hungarian Constitution speaks of a "responsibility for what happens to Hungarians living abroad" and former prime minister Antall sent a chill down his neighbors' spines by declaring himself the spiritual prime minister of fifteen million Hungarians (the population of Hungary is only ten million). Budapest does not conceal the fact that it expects reciprocity for its generous treatment of minorities. So far, however, all such expectations have been dashed. Hungarian diplomatic efforts to establish a network of bilateral agreements with countries containing Hungarian minorities have not borne fruit, with the exception of Ukraine, whose Hungarian community numbers only one hundred and fifty thousand. After over a year of negotiation Romania has not yet signed a treaty. After long delays, bitter wrangling, and considerable international pressure Slovakia has signed and ratified it. The future of this treaty (as well as the still awaited Romanian one) is compromised, however, by differing readings of the Council of Europe's recommendation 1201, to which the treaties refer and which Hungarians interpret as a guarantee of territorially based rights and autonomy. In this case, well-intentioned international efforts to set norms for minority protection may have exacerbated problems.

Several East Central European countries that are clearly not monoethnic would love to be so. The resulting discrepancy between the political ethos of Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania and the ethnic reality of these countries is an unabating source of tension.

Even independence has not succeeded in overcoming Slovak fears and resentment of their onetime overlords, the now six-hundred-thousand-strong Hungarian minority. The Slovak Constitution forbids affirmative action on behalf of ethnic minorities. The aggressively populist Mečiar government, with the support of both nationalists and communists, has made Slovak the sole official language. This law overrides earlier Czechoslovak-era legislation allowing official use of a minority language in areas where 20 percent of the population speak it (although officials in these areas were never required to understand it). Mečiar has promised to introduce a new minority language bill, even before being called to do so by the OSCE Minority Rights Commissioner. At present, however, the Hungarian-speaking municipal councils are—technically at least—illegal.

Slovakia's Hungarian minority has successfully waged elections (winning 17 out of 150 parliamentary seats), defended separate Hungarian-language schools (rather than bilingual schools), resisted gerrymandering assaults on its ethnically compact districts, and enlisted Budapest's diplomatic support in European organizations. Its strength makes one overlook the more precarious situation of Slovakia's other minorities. Roma, possibly numbering as many as seven hundred thousand, have been the object of local discrimination. Local curfews for Roma have been overturned by Parliament but the government itself caused a stir when its minister of health declared that it would try to ensure that more "white children" than Romanies were born. Although there are at least seven Roma political parties and numerous social organizations, they are ineffective.

Finally, Slovakia has witnessed the (re)birth of a new minority, the Ruthenians or Rusyns. These Greek Catholic Carpathians had been considered part of Slovakia's Ukrainian minority for half a century until a Toronto professor informed the world through the medium of an American scholarly journal that a new Slavic language, Rusyn, had been born, with offshoots in five countries. Rusyns thus have the potential of becoming the Kurds of East Central Europe. Perhaps fearing such a development, Slovakia has resisted proposals from its Ruthenians and Ukrainians to set up a Carpathian Euroregion.

Romania too has a "Hungarian problem." In fact, Slovakia and Romania have been making common cause at international forums in a reenactment of the interwar "Little Entente" directed against Hungarian revisionism. Although the percentage of Hungarians in Romania is smaller than in Slovakia (8 percent versus 12 percent of the total population) Romania's almost two million Hungarians constitute Europe's larg-

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est minority (as Hungarian sources tirelessly point out). Moreover, the burden of history weighs heavily on Romania's Hungarians, longtime suzerains of the principality of Transylvania and, more recently, prime victims of Ceausescu's pathological national communism. Hungarian institutions have had to be built from the ground up since 1989; at that time there remained no exclusively Hungarian schools and only a dwindling number of bilingual ones. Progress has been real but slow, in spite of the powerful Hungarian Democratic Federation, which constitutes the third-largest party in Parliament. For instance, the first mainly Hungarian radio station, promised since 1990, opened only in mid-1995.

The dilemma of the Romanian government is that it wants to be seen as meeting international minority protection standards, but it is reluctant to meet them. Romania has signed the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and it was the first state to sign the Council's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. Both government and minority representatives have claimed the support of the OSCE Minority Rights Commissioner with regard to their confrontation over a new education law. Above all, the Romanian government is terrified at the prospect of being forced to grant some sort of territorial autonomy to Hungarians.

To compensate for its reluctance to accommodate the Hungarians, Romania has attempted to integrate a dozen numerically insignificant and docile minorities. It has allotted them parliamentary seats and has set up a consultative minority council, in response to a private American proposal. The Hungarians, considering this council no substitute for the ministry of nationalities they had been demanding, soon pulled out. The role of the council and parliamentary representatives as "window dressing" was further underscored when the government decreed a change of name for Roma, henceforth to be known as Tigani ("Roma" sounding too much like "Romanian"). It acted without any consultation, thus displaying contempt not only for its Roma population, whose numbers run to several hundred thousand, but also for its own minority institutions.

At least one-sixth and possibly one-quarter of Bulgaria's nine million inhabitants belong to minorities. In the last years of the communist regime Bulgaria sought to expel or assimilate its Turkish and Pomak or Bulgarian-speaking Muslim population (up to a million and three hundred thousand members respectively) and to ignore the existence of a Roma minority (between four hundred and fifty thousand and eight hundred thousand). With democratization, outright repression has ceased and almost half the three hundred thousand Turks expelled have returned. Few observers would conclude, however, that majority/minority relations are on an even keel.

The new Bulgarian Constitution recognizes no ethnic minorities but only citizens for whom "Bulgarian is not the mother tongue." They are guaranteed the right to study their language "in parallel with the obligatory study of Bulgarian" (but the study of other subjects in the mother tongue is not guaranteed). The Constitution contains a ban on affirmative action and on political activity by ethnic minority organizations as well as an express prohibition of autonomous territorial units. Minority political activists have circumvented restrictions by setting up the Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) which is formally nonethnic but commonly dubbed the "Turkish Party." For a time, this party enjoyed the balance of power in Parliament but even then it was unable to carry through its program because the mainstream parties, divided on most other matters, would come together to block it. With great difficulty it succeeded in introducing Turkish as an optional subject, before or after school hours, in some schools. This step provoked school boycotts by Bulgarian nationalists, and the Socialist majority government has vowed not to make any more concessions to the Turks.

In Bulgaria, as in other East Central European countries (with the exception of Poland where the number of Roma is insignificant), the political allegiance of Roma is the key to future minority politics. At present, Roma are depoliticized and disorganized. Their numerous parties quarrel among themselves and play no serious role. However, politicians who succeed in mobilizing Roma numerical strength will enjoy a powerful advantage. The mainstream parties have refused

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to do so and Roma leaders have been ineffective. The prime contenders for mobilizing Roma are the other minority parties and their task is facilitated by the often fluid ethnic identity of Roma. In the case of Bulgaria, for example, Roma are often referred to or sometimes even refer to themselves as Turks, thus putting themselves into the hands of the MRF.

Albania's minority statistics are even less reliable than others'. Given the minorities' present quiescence, it may be of little political importance whether Albania's Roma, South Slavs, and Vlachs (a nomadic sheepherding people), really number one hundred thousand each in a country of three million. On the other hand, the strength of the Greek minority is one of Albania's most pressing international concerns. Figures vary from the official fifty-nine thousand to almost ten times that number; a CIA estimate of two hundred and seventy thousand is considered high but not outrageously so. The Greek minority has founded its own party, Omonia, initially banned as unconstitutional but relegalized under international pressure and under a neutral name.

Above all, the minority question is a major irritant in Greek-Albanian relations. These relations are already bedeviled by a barely buried territorial disagreement over Albanian Southern Epirus, provocatively referred to as Northern Epirus by Greece. They are further strained by the presence of several hundred thousand illegal Albanian workers in Greece and by Albania's occasional harassment of Greek minority activists, including clergymen. Above all, hostility is exacerbated by Athens' fears of Muslim and Slav encirclement, manipulated for domestic political reasons, as well as by Tirana's rough disregard of political and diplomatic norms.

In the light of these acute tensions it is encouraging that Albania and Greece have just decided to sign a friendship treaty, although precedents suggest that this will not be the end of their differences. A stronger guarantee of future tranquillity lies in the pressure exerted on Greece by its European Union partners and in Albania's utter economic dependence on the West. Albania's peaceful behavior is also dictated by the fact that the Greek dispute is but one of several confrontations into which this nation, almost half of whose conationals live abroad, could be drawn.

Former Yugoslavia is the tragic refutation of optimism on the minority issue. Minorities are at the heart of the Yugoslav conflict inasmuch as it was fueled throughout by the refusal of all concerned to live as minorities within a state dominated by others. A measure of the disaster that has occurred is that minority spokesmen in the successor republics now refer to the minority regime of Tito's oppressive and authoritarian Yugoslavia as an enviable arrangement.

Even ethnically homogeneous Slovenia has been summoned by the OSCE to devise a system of minority representation and it finds its accession to some international organizations blocked by a dispute involving a minuscule Italian minority. However, Slovenia's most serious encounter with minority issues may lie in the future when up to one hundred and fifty thousand Bosnians living there before independence, now joined by as many as one hundred thousand refugees, begin to organize politically.

Croatia has "solved" its minority problem by overrunning the Serb autonomous areas whose refusal to accept a diminished constitutional role in an independent Croatia triggered war in 1991. At one blow, Croatia has also freed itself from the constraints of its own charter of ethnic communities, adopted in return for international recognition, inasmuch as the charter applies only to communities exceeding 8 percent of the population. There is still an undetermined number of largely "invisible" Serbs in Zagreb and elsewhere but the once six-hundred-thousand-strong Serb community of Croatia has been decimated and cowed. Moreover, President Tudjman has given notice that he will not tolerate any minority or regional platforms, as in the case of Istria, where a local law empowering minorities was struck down as unconstitutional.

If Serbia and Montenegro hoped to become ethnically homogeneous by shedding their sister republics, they have failed. Minorities make up over one third of the population of rump Yugoslavia. Setting aside a minority bill proposed by the short-lived Panič government, Belgrade

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instinctively resorts to ad hoc repression. This is easy enough in the case of three hundred thousand Hungarians who constitute a minority within the formerly autonomous province of Voivodina. It is feasible too with regard to the three hundred thousand Muslims of the Sandjak, which straddles Serbia and Montenegro. However, the limits of repression have been reached in Kosovo where almost two million Albanians confront one-tenth that many Serbs. Ten years ago Kosovars demanded equal status with other Yugoslav republics; today they demand independence. It is feared, not only in Belgrade but in Brussels and Washington, that tomorrow they will seek unification with Albania, thus setting off a regional redistribution of power and borders with immeasurable consequences. For the moment, the only reassuring note is that the Kosovo underground government of Ibrahim Rugova, acting as a national liberation movement, is committed to exclusively pacific means of struggle.

Macedonia, the one republic that left Yugoslavia peacefully, is buckling under the strains of independence. Challenged openly by Greece and tacitly by Bulgaria, it requires internal consensus for survival. Instead, the abyss is growing between the Slavic majority, which constitutes 60 percent of the 2.2 million inhabitants, and the Albanians who make up most of the minority population. Skopje has introduced affirmative action programs to raise the number of Albanians and other minorities in the public service. With international financing it has set up broadcasting services in minority languages. It has shied away, however, from granting Albanians their key symbolic demand: restoration of their former constitutional status as a constitutive nation of the state. Recent memories of anti-Albanian policies, which included bans on land purchase and on conferring Albanian nationalist names on children, have revived with the ongoing refusal of Skopje to allow an Albanian-language university. Although the principal Albanian political party, the Party of Democratic Prosperity, is a member of the government coalition it has petitioned the Council of Europe not to admit Macedonia into the Council. Moreover, the party has split, the dissident faction embarking on a policy of confrontation. In Macedonia as elsewhere, the future allegiance of other minorities—Roma, Turkish, Vlach, Muslim—may well determine the balance of power.

As for the unhappy state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, all speculation on the future of minorities must be suspended until the dust of war settles. The outlook is grim. The Dayton Accords conceded the principle of ethnic separation as a lesser evil to continued bloodshed. The extent to which such separation has imposed itself was demonstrated in the recent evacuation of Serb suburbs of Sarajevo. Those Serbs who refused to move were threatened by Bosnian Serb gangs. Those who stayed in spite of these threats were hounded out by Muslim thugs.

What conclusions can one draw from this very mixed picture of minority issues in East Central Europe? Traditional minorities have disappeared or diminished but they have been partially replaced by new ones, most notably Roma who, with Albanians, are the only growing population in the area. In all these countries the importance of minorities still exceeds what their numbers warrant. This is not only because of a tendency to define political demands in ethnic terms or because of international interest in minority protection. It is also because most states of the area still see the presence of minorities as a challenge to their identity.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs. Throughout most of East Central Europe there is at least some commitment to due process and to the rule of law. Minority demands are increasingly dealt with like other political issues. Territorial autonomy for minorities remains an absolute taboo, especially in the wake of the recent collapse of federal states in the area, but governments acknowledge that the Western countries they admire and envy are pluralistic.

No one should expect a "solution" for the minority issue. What one can hope for is that the East Central European countries will continue to learn through their own experience with the understanding encouragement of the outside world and in a favorable international climate. In light of the alternatives, past and present, muddling through may be good enough. □

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Ronald Grigor Suny

THE STATE OF NATIONS

The Ex-Soviet Union and its Peoples

When the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, pundits predicted that it would end up like Yugoslavia, with ethnic wars tearing the union into fragments. Russians left "abroad"—in Central Asia, Crimea, and the Baltic Republics—would become tinder for conflagrations. Islamic fundamentalism, some claimed, would infect the traditionally Muslim peoples of the south and the Volga region. Yet in the last five years, ethnic conflict, though explosive and bloody in several places, has not spread across the ex-USSR. The belief that ethnic difference must lead to ethnic conflict and even to ethnic cleansing has not been borne out by the post-Soviet experience. Despite weak state structures, disintegrating economies, and widespread anxiety about the future, ethnicity has not metastasized into open widespread violence.

Most of the Soviet republics were not ethnically homogeneous. With over 93 percent of its population Armenian, tiny Armenia was the most ethnically consolidated, especially after it drove out nearly two hundred thousand Azerbaijanis in 1988-1989. In Azerbaijan, Lithuania and Belarus more than 77 percent of the population consisted of the titular nationality. But Estonia (61.5 percent Estonian), Latvia (52 percent Latvian), and Kyrgyzstan (52.4 percent Kyrgyz) could be considered binational states, with very large Russian or Slavic minorities, and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan were actually a minority of the republic's population (39 percent). Russia was fairly homogeneous, with 81.5 percent of the population ethnically Russian. Yet even in Russia, a look at an ethnographic map shows that the greatest concentration of Russians is in European Russia and along the southern border, extending out to the Pacific Ocean. In the Volga region, however, there are concentrated populations of Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashi, Udmurts, Mordva, Mari, and Komi. Much of Siberia is sparsely populated by Russians; the varied native peoples of Siberia, although not numerous, have their own national regions and republics. Even in the south there are concentrated pockets of non-Russians.

It is difficult to assert, as the Soviet government did with ill-considered hubris, that the "national question," the problem of relations between Russians and non-Russian ethnic peoples, has been solved. With war raging in Chechnya and hostility toward "peoples of Caucasian complexion" simmering in Moscow, the threat of ethnic conflict in post-Soviet Russia remains real. Russian journalists and political entrepreneurs speak of the danger of the "Muslim crescent," the band of Muslim peoples that extends from the North Caucasus through the center of Russia up the Volga. And anti-Semitism taints the more chauvinist expressions of Russian nationalists. The potential for conflict remains, but somehow it has been contained and channeled in other directions.

Violence and Boundaries

The experience of the former Soviet Union suggests that violence is most likely when the boundaries of a nation or state are in dispute. As Gorbachev's state withered away in 1991, the fifteen union republics declared themselves fully independent and were quickly recognized by the world powers. At the same time, internal borders within those republics were preserved, and

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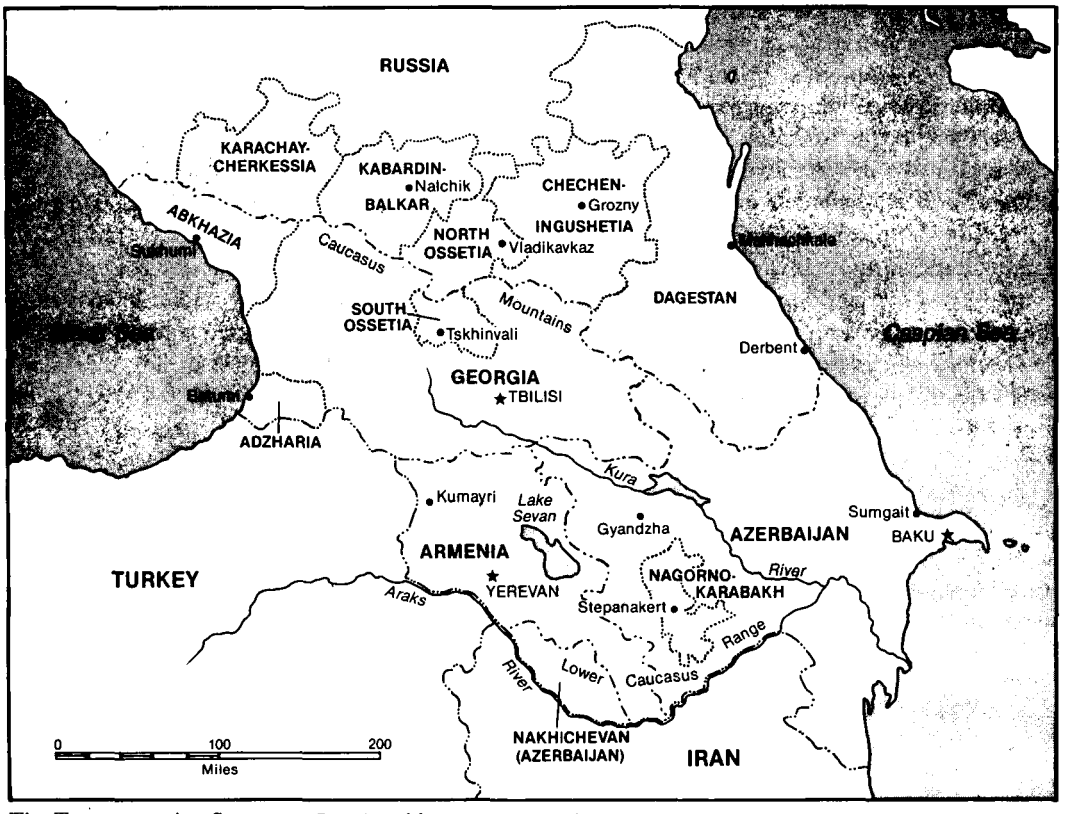

The Transcaucasian States *Reprinted by permission of Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Washington, D.C.*

thus distinctions between regions and republics remained.

A series of bloody conflicts erupted precisely over the definition and boundaries of the new nation-states—between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over whether the Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh would remain in Azerbaijan, be joined to neighboring Armenia, or become an independent republic; between Georgians, Abkhazians, and Ossetians over the future of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within a Georgian state; between the Slavic people of Transdneistria, who feared integration into a Romanianizing Moldovan republic; and between Chechens and Russians over the Chechens' desire to secede from the new Russia. Also in the Russian republic there was a violent dispute over borders and territory between the tiny North Caucasian republics of Alania (North Ossetia) and Ingushetia. The civil war in Tajikistan, on the other hand, which led to armed Russian intervention, and the war of Georgians against Georgians that deposed the extreme nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia and brought Eduard Shevardnadze back to power, were not primarily ethnic but political conflicts between rival elites.

Even where lines on maps were not contested, disputes arose over membership in the nation, although usually (at least so far) without violence. The democratic and seemingly peaceful Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—sought to define the contours of the nation through new citizenship laws. While the Lithuanians simply accepted all permanent inhabitants as citizens, Estonia and Latvia instituted restrictive language and settlement requirements that for a time disenfranchised the large Russian and Russo-speaking minorities. Under pressure from Boris Yeltsin's Russia and with the mediation of international commissions, the Baltic leadership eventually moderated its policies, avoiding the potential violence that plagued the Caucasus and Moldova. However, the dominant nationalities in each of the republics embarked on nationalizing programs—enforcing language laws, changing street signs to the official lan-

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guage of the republic—that forced the Russians, whom they considered "occupiers," to make the choice between emigration and conformity to the rules of the newly dominant nations.

In Russia itself two factors contributed to the relative lack of open violence. In most of the Russian Federation ethnic Russians are demographically dominant. Second, non-Russians have institutions through which they can exercise their power, at least locally, and work within the system to shape their own future. One of the most lasting legacies of Soviet nationality policy was the formation of autonomous national regions in which the nationalities enjoyed to a certain degree their own schools, cultural institutions, and local ethnic elites. Never fully sovereign and often subjected to campaigns of Russification, the non-Russians of the Soviet Union nevertheless managed not only to preserve aspects of their traditional culture but in many ways to gain the levers of cultural power. Elaborate affirmative action programs, beginning with the policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization) in the 1920s, promoted people from the local nationality in the ethnic regions and republics.

The Soviet Union presented itself as a mosaic of ethnic cultures protected by the state, though ethnicity was always seen as something quaint and particular, eventually to be transcended through universal economic progress toward modern, socialist society. Soviet policy towards non-Russians ranged from mass literacy campaigns to genocidal deportations to Siberia and Central Asia. Millions of Soviet people assimilated to the general Russianized Soviet culture at a time when political success and upward social mobility was predicated on becoming culturally competent in Russian language and behavior. Elsewhere, in remote villages and mountain settlements, traditional customs were precariously maintained outside the reach of Soviet authorities. The USSR was an unevenly modernized society where one could encounter in major cities the modern and traditional side-by-side, the diesel truck and the horse-drawn cart, Muslims in business suits and robes and turbans, women in miniskirts and peasant scarves. Nationality was preserved on the internal passports carried by every adult Soviet citizen, and politics and social life were colored by the ever-present consciousness of who was what ethnically.

Many of the limits on national self-expression of Soviet times have fallen away. In the last years of Soviet power non-Russians in the union republics, as well as the national enclaves of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Tuva, Sakha-Yakutia, and Chechnya within Russia itself intensified their claims against the center and accumulated political power in their designated national homelands. After Russia declared itself sovereign within the Soviet Union in June 1990, almost all the autonomous republics within Russia made similar declarations. In his struggle against Gorbachev and the Soviet central power, Yeltsin supported the ambitions of non-Russian republics. "Take as much power as you can swallow," he told an eager audience in Tatarstan in August 1990. By the end of the year almost all the autonomous republics and autonomous regions had declared themselves sovereign republics whose laws took precedence over all-union laws.

A New Russia

Boris Yeltsin's Russia was a new state; never before had an independent state existed within these borders. At its birth in 1991, this Russia's leaders saw it as both the juridical successor to the Soviet Union, taking over its assets within the republic and its embassies abroad, and the accelerator of the radical reforms begun by Gorbachev. Yeltsin's team set out to create a democratic polity, a free-market capitalist economy, and a federal state structure to accommodate the ethnically and regionally diverse population. Democratization, marketization, and anti-imperialism were to go hand-in-hand, but without the disastrous consequences that had befallen Gorbachev's attempt at a similar triple revolution.

Even as they distanced themselves from Gorbachev's hesitant reform style and dove headlong into radical restructuring of the state and economy, the Yeltsinites accepted the former government's notion that economic, political, and nationality reform had to be carried out simultaneously. Economic progress required the end of state controls in the economy and real privatization, which meant eliminating the Com-

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munist *nomenklatura,* the main obstacle to democracy. Everything depended, in turn, on maintaining the state, no longer in its hypercentralized deformity but as a federation with power sharing among center, regions, and republics. Now, as the head of independent Russia, Yeltsin's task was to stop the fragmentation process he himself had encouraged earlier.

To create a new state from the core of the one that had just been abolished was a formidable task. External borders had to be shored up and internal relations between the federal center and the "subjects" within the federation had to be regularized. But there was no consensus among the Russian political elite, let alone the broader population, about the internal and external contours of the new Russia or the reach of its military and political power. What was to be its role in the "Near Abroad"? Should Moscow be the mediator of ethnic conflicts? Protector of the Russian diaspora? Ruler in its traditional sphere of interest?

Without careful consideration Yeltsin questioned the permanence of Russia's external borders; after all, they left twenty-five million Russians living outside the Russian Federation. He quickly backed down since it was obvious that trying to shift borders would have launched a ruinous war of all against all. Yeltsin's team decided quite early to treat all fifteen of the former Soviet republics as sovereign and independent states and to forgo imperial claims over their freedom of action. The first months after the Soviet collapse was a period of Russian retreat from its imperial role, a turning inward to deal with precipitous economic decline and to lay the foundations for a democratic political system.

Asymmetry

There was also no agreement about Russia's internal structure and its self-conception as a nation. Would Russia become a true federation, with power shared between the center and the regions and republics, or would it become a unitary state? Was Russia to become a nation-state of the ethnic Russian people, or a state of all peoples of Russia, or the core of a reconstituted imperial state? Yeltsin opted for a middle road, a federation of all of the peoples of Russia, but was faced with enormous liabilities. Russian national identity was complexly interwoven with ethnic affiliations, religious and cultural allegiances, as well as a sense of greatness and imperial destiny. For many people identification with the new state was far weaker than their nostalgia for the dissolved USSR. Over the next several years the lack of popular identification with a Russian nation, the frustrating difficulties of the new capitalist order, corruption and crime, and a growing nostalgia for stabler, more predictable Soviet times encouraged politicians on the Communist left and the nationalist right to resuscitate enthusiasm for the old Soviet Union. At the same time regionalism continued to grow. Siberians met in Krasnoyarsk to discuss their local interests, and in Yeltsin's home territory people spoke of a "Urals' Republic." Ethnic republics rich in resources, like Tatarstan and Sakha-Yakutia, asserted claims to their natural wealth.

Yeltsin's interim solution was a set of federal treaties in March 1992 in which Russian regions signed on as "constituent units," while the ethnic republics were allowed to claim status as "sovereign states" within the federation. Tatarstan and Chechnya, however, refused to sign, and others, like Bashkortostan and Kalmykia, added amendments that amounted to special deals with Moscow. The result was a highly asymmetrical federalism in which ethnic republics ended up with more rights over their "land, minerals, water, flora and fauna" than did Russian regions. As the economy spiraled downward through 1992 and 1993, regions and republics were burdened with providing social services locally without funding from the center. Their response was to withhold locally gathered taxes due to the federal authorities. Several Russian regions declared themselves to be sovereign "republics" even without the usual ethnic requirements. And ten republics claimed that their laws were higher than those of the federation. The right to secede remained unclear. Moscow was so weak and divided that it was unable either to discipline the resistant regions or republics or to reward the more loyal ones. Russia, many thought, was on the brink of disintegration.

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While the president and his men in the Kremlin were trying to hammer together a federal state, Parliament, dominated by the opposition, undermined their efforts, at times encouraging devolution of power from the center, at other times favoring its own version of federation. Finally, in frustration and desperation, Yeltsin overthrew the legislature in September 1993, bloodily repressed its resistance to his unconstitutional move, removed regional leaderships—even those democratically elected, and pushed through a new Constitution that was barely (if at all) approved by voters. Resistance to the new Constitution was greatest in the ethnic republics, where only a quarter of the population, and less than half of those who voted, cast their ballots for it. Ominously the turnout in Tatarstan was extremely low, and Chechnya did not participate in the election at all.

The December 1993 Constitution established a new framework for federalism. It clearly reflected Yeltsin's willingness to impose his own vision, vague as it was. In Moscow there would be a bicameral national legislature with the lower house, the Duma, representing the population in general and the upper house, the Council of the Federation, representing the eighty-nine regions and republics. Real power lay in the hands of Yeltsin and the Duma. The president was empowered to reject regional decisions that he considered unconstitutional, and the Duma had the right to overrule the Council's veto of ordinary legislation. No republics would be called "sovereign" any longer.

Regional leaders were chastened and they accepted the new rules of the political game. Even as their influence weakened on the national level, they increased their hold locally. Some self-declared republics, like the Urals, reverted quietly to regions again, and even recalcitrant Tatarstan became less confrontational and began to compromise with Moscow.

The Chechnya Crisis

The only republic that refused to sign on to Yeltsin's federation was Chechnya, which had declared itself an independent state in late 1991. Chechens, the most numerous of the North Caucasian people, numbered just under a million in 1989. Along with their neighbors, the Ingushi, they speak a North-Central Caucasian language unrelated to any other and said by linguists to have been native to this area since prehistoric times. A highly rural society organized in clans related to dialect groups, Chechens are remarkably cohesive as a nationality, especially when confronted with threats from the outside. Patriarchal yet roughly egalitarian otherwise, renowned for their hospitality, and influenced by revivalist Islamic movements like the Sufi brotherhoods, Chechens had repeatedly resisted Russian overlordship. They were active in Imam Shamil's wars against czarist Russia in the mid-nineteenth century and resisted Soviet power during the revolution and civil war. In 1944 Stalin exiled the Chechens and Ingushi to Central Asia as alleged collaborators with the Nazi invaders. Tens of thousands perished during the journey and the resettlement process. Twelve years later Khrushchev restored their republic and returned the survivors.

At the time of the 1991 coup against Gorbachev, a council of Chechen elders invited Jokhar Dudaev, then a high-ranking Chechen air force officer vacationing at home though scheduled to return to his unit in the Baltics, to speak to the gathering. Dudaev had been inspired by the recent Baltic independence movements and spoke in favor of Chechen separation from Russia. He was immediately elected leader of the council and, with a small band of armed men, he marched to the Communist party headquarters and seized power. Yeltsin was prepared to move against Dudaev but was restrained by the Russian parliament. For three years there was a tense standoff, during which Yeltsin negotiated federal arrangements with all the other sectors within Russia. Attempts to subvert the Dudaev government failed, as did mercenary military operations in November 1994. Finally, Yeltsin and his security council decided to invade Chechnya. There was no public debate or consultation with Parliament.

The war went badly from the beginning. Chechen resistance led to the destruction of Groznyi, a city of four hundred thousand, by the Russian military and to a massive flow of refugees into the neighboring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan. This tragedy disproportionately affected local Russians, who actually made up

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the majority of the population of Groznyi and had less chance to flee to mountain villages. Local Russians had long lived in peace with the Chechens, and even in the heat of the fighting they weren't the victims of any atrocities. In the meantime, nightly television images of wanton destruction rapidly turned public opinion against the war, and Yeltsin's standing in the polls dropped steeply. His image as a democrat, already sullied by his action against the Parliament a year earlier, was tarnished. The Chechnya fighting also demonstrated the extent to which the Russian army had disintegrated. At the same time non-Russian peoples within the federation were given a brutal lesson about the consequences of secessionism. Not surprisingly, mistrust of Moscow also grew. Still, Chechnya was less the result of a visceral Russian expansionism, as feared in the West, than it was a spasmodic imperial response by a leadership afraid that the country faced a Soviet-style disintegration.

Such dissolution is, in fact, a remote possibility. The Russian and non-Russian populations are interwoven in complex ways. When analysts consider minorities in the new Russian state, they usually mean the non-Russians, but in eleven of the twenty-one national republics Russians actually constitute the minority, though hardly an endangered one. Nearly 12 million Russians live in the designated national republics, autonomous districts, and the one national region, alongside 17.7 million non-Russians.

Russians in the republics are socially as well as ethnically differentiated from non-Russians. The native peoples tend to live in the countryside, are more traditional in their lifestyles, and tend to have higher birth rates, while Russians live in cities, work in industry, the professions, or government, and have fewer children. Russians make up the majorities of all the capital cities of the republics, except for the North Caucasian republics and Chuvashia. As a consequence of all these factors, Russians are usually overrepresented in the local intelligentsias.

Since the Gorbachev years, however, non-Russians have increased their hold on official state positions and cultural institutions in the republics. In conditions of economic distress, this "renationalization" of local power gives non-Russians a great advantage in contests over the redistribution of influence, social advantage, and even wealth. As conditions worsen, some Russians have been leaving many of the national republics, in the same way that they have migrated from Central Asia and Transcaucasia back into Russia. Still, most Russians want to stay where they are and make a life for themselves, even when they are dismayed by recent changes.

These findings come from a team of Russian researchers that has investigated attitudes in four republics and uncovered a broad range of responses to the post-Soviet condition. They have discovered that only a small proportion of the non-Russians (between 5 and 10 percent) want to secede from Russia, but 40 percent to 60 percent desire more autonomy and equal treatment by the center. People are more interested in economic matters, the local intelligentsias are more concerned with cultural issues like the use of the native language and the teaching of history from the point of view of the native people. Relations between Russians and non-Russians have not been particularly hostile and tend to be more harmonious in republics like Tatarstan where the ratio of the two communities is in rough parity.

Fallout

By the last months of 1995 the most fundamental questions of state and nation had become entangled in electoral politics, first for the Duma in December and then looking ahead to the June 1996 presidential elections. "Reintegration" of the old Soviet Union gained broad support. The fallout from the war in Chechnya, the depressed economy, and the general lawlessness and insecurity in Russian society turned many people, among them non-Russians, away from Yeltsin and the self-styled democrats to seek alternatives to the current chaos. Several non-Russian republics voted heavily in December for the Communist party, which emerged as the largest political party in the new Duma. In mid-March 1996 Yeltsin signed a decree institutionalizing power-sharing with the republics and the regions. He ruled that secession from the federation was prohibited, and that constitutions could not infringe

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on the established powers of the federal center.

On March 15, the newly elected Russian State Duma, led by the Communists, sent a shock through the former Soviet Union. By a vote of 250 to 98, it renounced the decision of the Russian Supreme Soviet of December 1991 to abrogate the 1922 treaty that established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Then, by an even more overwhelming majority, it affirmed the March 1991 referendum in which voters had supported the formation of a Union of Sovereign Republics, which was then being developed by Gorbachev. In effect the Duma had declared that the Soviet Union still existed and that Russia was an illegitimate state.

Reaction was swift. Yeltsin appeared on television to ask what authority the Duma itself had if the Soviet Union still exists. Ironically, the only elected figure who could claim a legitimate connection with the old USSR was Yeltsin himself, who had been elected president of the Russian Soviet republic in June 1991. A chorus of leaders from other former Soviet republics denounced the Duma too; its decision undermined not only Russia's independent status, but the claims of all of the republics to sovereignty. The Council of the Federation called on the Duma to reconsider. Russian foreign minister Evgenii Primakov warned that the decision weakened Russia's credibility abroad and strengthened advocates of NATO expansion into eastern Europe. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher strongly criticized the resolution and turned up the heat by supporting emphatically an expansion of NATO. Even the Communist party leader, Gennadii Zyuganov, whose comrades initiated the resolution, began to back away, declaring that reintegration should not be achieved through force but by consent.

At the same time, politicians tried to trump one another as champions of "reintegration." Yeltsin invited Belorussian president Aleksandr Lukashenko to Moscow where they agreed to create a new "unity" between the two Slavic republics. But when Lukashenko spoke publicly about a tight union between Russia and Belarus, Yeltsin characterized the effort as "deep integration leading to confederation." Late in March agreements were signed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as well, but the leaders of all four states shied away from speaking of a single state.

Identity Crisis

Almost five years after the end of the Soviet Union, Russia has not consolidated its own identity, has not settled on what kind of state it will become or what form the nation within it will take. Discussion about Russia's future shape dwells on basic doubts about its legitimacy and survivability, speculation about its contraction or expansion, and disagreements about its internal cohesion. Add to this the volatility of contemporary Russian politics and it is easy to understand the anxiety felt in the rest of the former USSR. In the meantime, Russia's future is being determined by deals made among powerful actors, sometimes with quite short-range and mercenary goals in mind. Moscow buys peace with the regions and ethnic republics by offering this or that. The situation remains unstable, and the structural arrangements inconsistent. The Russian state, like those in other former Soviet republics, is still gelatinous; what powers the center will allow the regions and republics and what powers they in turn can keep from the center remains the great unknown.

In the rubble left after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and the other new states struggle over the shape of their new nations. Nationalists at times attempt to realize their dream of every nation having its own state, and every state having one nation, but such congruence can be achieved only through violence, ethnic cleansing, or even genocide. In today's world, states have heterogeneous populations, made up of different ethnicities, religious groups, social classes, regional allegiances, urban-rural distinctions—all shifting in the modern and post-modern environment of rapid mobility, transnational migration, international economics, and overlapping and changing identities. The fate of Yugoslavia still hovers over the former Soviet Union but it remains a possibility, not an inevitability, in Russia. Heaving but not yet sinking, Russia and a number of other republics have navigated the shoals of ethnicity and kept their weak and leaking states afloat. The wreckage of those who failed lies all around, and no one can know what lies ahead. □

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Hazim Saghieyeh

MINORITIES IN THE ARAB HEARTLAND

The story of minorities in the contemporary Arab world is not an especially happy one. It is useful to begin a survey of them with Lebanon, if only because this small country was once perceived both as a refuge for minorities and as an alternative model for inter-communal relations in the region. Some seventeen sects, comprising a population of 3.5 million, lived here together in relative though sometimes precarious accord until civil war devastated the "Lebanese way of life" in the mid-1970s. An array of regional factors intruded then, exacerbating Lebanon's weaknesses and upsetting a delicate religious and ethnic balance. Thus ended a singular form of Mideast democracy, one that had lasted some three decades and contrasted sharply to the other Arab states, which were governed by either monarchical dynasties or dictatorships.

Lebanese politics was based on an unwritten "National Pact" fashioned when independence from France was achieved in 1943. It rested on a confessional system in which it was understood that each major group had certain prerogatives. For example, the president was to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the foreign minister a Greek Orthodox, the Defense Minister a Druze, the speaker of the assembly a Shiite, and so on. The Assembly had a six-to-five ratio of Christians to non-Christians (based on a 1932 census—the only one available).

This might seem a shaky way to govern, but the aim was to accommodate a plethora of minorities in a land where no single group composed a majority. One reason it worked as long as it did was that the middle classes were broader than in much of the Arab world. The country enjoyed relative stability and a coupling of political democracy with an active, prosperous private sector while nationalist radicalism, turmoil, and military coups engulfed Arabs elsewhere. As a consequence, there was an immense flow of capital into Beirut, which became the Arab world's banking and investment center; economic well-being bolstered political compromise, although capitalism thrived concurrently with the entrenched power of a powerful landlord class.

Lebanon's Collapse

Finally the country could not be isolated from regional developments. There was a brief but severe disruption in 1958. Pan-Arabism (especially Nasserism) was then stirring the Arab world; agitation, armaments, and money were supplied by Cairo and Damascus to their allies in Lebanon, and Christian-Muslim tensions in Lebanon exploded in civil strife that brought foreign intervention (U.S. troops) in its wake. Things stabilized, only to unravel a decade later. The Arab-Israeli conflict, and especially the re-emergence of Palestinian nationalism after 1967, put Lebanon—which contains a sizable population of refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war—under great pressure. Palestinian incursions from Lebanon into Israel resulted in Israeli retaliations. This pressure increased after 1970-1971 when, following the PLO's defeat in the Jordanian civil war, the principal concentration of Palestinian armed forces moved into the miserable refugee camps in Lebanon. Although the country had avoided extensive entanglements in Arab-Israeli confrontations, now it could not escape them,

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and Palestinian groups also aligned with various Lebanese communal factions. This was complicated by Damascus's policy of supporting Palestinian attacks from Lebanon into Israel while preventing them from Syria, which thereby escaped counter-strikes.

A collective hysteria increasingly possessed the Lebanese, and none of the country's communities was immune. A breach opened between Lebanese society and its past constitutional and political norms. All the Christian sects (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and so on) may have together composed a majority, but they are part of a minority in the Arab world. Hence they emphasized Lebanonism rather than Arabism, and pressed for the protections democracy afforded them. In addition, the Christians (especially the Maronites), who dominated the army, advocated strong measures against the Palestinians. They also showed little understanding of the Shia Muslim population, which was now beginning to assert itself. Since the early 1970s a new breed of educated and well-to-do Shia leaders had emerged, calling for reforms that would increase the power of their community, which is poor and concentrated in the south and the Bekaa Valley.

Lebanese Muslims, especially Sunnis, allied with the Palestinians, whose fighters became an "alternative army" to the government's "Christian army." Even though Muslims and Christians enjoyed roughly equal social, economic, and political opportunities, at least theoretically, the Muslims grew fiercely antagonistic to the Lebanese state. They borrowed a majoritarian "Arabist" consciousness from the region around them and thought little of distinguishing what was "inside" (Lebanon itself) from what was "outside" (the Arab world as a whole); there was, moreover, little recognition that this would frighten non-Muslims. The Lebanese left, in the meantime, contributed to the undoing of the state by advocating a "Unity of Struggle"—the linkage of internal Lebanese problems to the Palestinian revolution. What came, finally, was not "unity" but a war of fragmentation in which all camps—Christian, Muslim, Palestinian—splintered within and against each other.

And in the end, Damascus, which never really accepted Lebanon's amputation from Syria during the French mandate, asserted its hegemony in Lebanon through "peace-keepers."

The Ba'ath Regimes: Syria and Iraq

Syria itself is dominated by a minority. Since 1963, the Alawi, who make up about 11 percent of the population but are entrenched in the military elite, have, through the Ba'ath party dictatorship, ruled over a vast Sunni majority. Ba'ath ideology is Pan-Arabist, so an interesting contrast emerges: whereas Maronites in Lebanon used "Lebanonism" to respond to their minority status in the Arab world, the Alawi turned to radical Arab nationalism and militancy toward Israel as responses to their minority status in Syria.

The Alawi are a dissident offshoot from Shiite Islam, which is itself a dissident offshoot from Islam's Sunni mainstream. They were long an oppressed, poverty-stricken rural community. Many of their ablest sons found a way out through military careers, which were shunned by well-to-do urban Sunnis. Alawi officers became the voice of their community and the backbone of the Ba'ath; and as Ba'ath Pan-Arabism was a vehicle of radical lower-middle-class revolt against older elites in the Arab world, so in Syria it served those dissatisfied with bourgeois (and, not incidently, Sunni) hegemony. But whereas the Christian role in Lebanon was long fortified by that community's economic and cultural success, this was not so with the Alawi in Syria; hence the need for military dictatorship.

To Syria's east, Iraq has, since 1968, been governed also by a Ba'ath party. Thus a common Pan-Arabist ideology reigned in Baghdad and Damascus. The consequence, however, was competition for leadership rather than unity, and this intensified after Egypt was ostracized in the Arab world for its peace with Israel in 1978. While Syria's Sunnis are a majority dominated by a minority, Iraqi Sunnis are a dominating minority. Arab Sunnis, with about 20 percent of Iraq's population, have also used the Iraqi Ba'ath to rule their country, repressing Shiites (who make up about 60 percent and are ethnic Arabs, unlike their Iranian co-religionists next door) and bru-

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tally subjugating the Kurds. The latter, though mostly Sunni Muslim in religion, are a distinct ethnic/national community with their own language who compose about 20 percent of Iraq's inhabitants.

Historic Kurdistan comprises parts of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, all three of which have sought to stifle any efforts aimed at Kurdish independence or autonomy. Iranian and Turkish Kurds have suffered considerable oppression—principally, though not entirely, cultural—yet it is hardly comparable to the violence perpetrated by Baghdad. The problem goes back at least to the 1920s, when Britain was given a League of Nations Mandate that stitched together three very different Ottoman provinces into contemporary Iraq. The Kurds were in the north, the Arab Sunnis in the center, and the Arab Shiites in the south; in addition there was an array of other groups such as Turkomans, Yazidis, Christians, and Jews (the latter were mostly gone after 1950). The common denominator was the absence of a common denominator. Baghdad sought, forcefully, to impose unity throughout the state. Needless to say, the Kurds viewed the whole arrangement with suspicion. Ensuing decades were marked by Kurdish revolts, often with foreign help.

The Ba'ath responded with an "iron fist." Expression of particularity by any community became a symptom of conspiracy and dissidence. For Baghdad's Pan-Arabism—whose early ideologists were, in the late 1920s, deeply influenced by German nationalism and romanticism—Kurds were an "anomaly." Even though Baghdad acquiesced to Kurdish "autonomy" in 1970, it almost immediately violated it. The onslaught against the Kurds became increasingly appalling, especially during the Iraq-Iran war. Perhaps the worst moment was the March 1988 assault with chemical weapons on the Kurdish village of Halabja, resulting in a massive slaughter (in "retaliation" for Kurdish "collaboration" with Teheran).

After the Gulf War of 1991, Iraqi Kurdistan received international protection, preventing a return of Saddam's forces. This was coupled with the establishment of a Kurdish parliament and local government. Initial optimism was dashed quickly, as Kurds were soon ensnared in their own internecine rivalries, undermining prospects for stability and their own safety from within. There have been bloody clashes between the two leading Kurdish factions.

Arab-Kurdish friction finds a parallel in the Sunni-Shia feud in Iraq, although here the problem is religious rather than ethnic, and the sources are ancient. The traditional Iraqi elite is Sunni, and when political misunderstandings or class tensions arise, fanatics in its ranks still look back in anger to Shia's origins in a rebellion against Islam's mainstream in the seventh century. The Shia, in turn, recall that it was then that their great leader the Imam Ali bin abi Taleb and his son al-Hussein were assassinated, leading to the Sunni-Shia split (whose cultural and political dimensions—and animosities—have reproduced over the centuries).

Since Iraq's birth, Baghdad has tried to keep the Arab Shia majority at bay. The Shia tribal organization (which is similar to that of the Kurds), together with their "dissident faith," was seen by Sunnis as obstacles to the consolidation of a modern, centralized state. And while the Sunni-dominated Ba'ath spoke ambiguously of "secularism," Shia were still barred from the officer corps. Not surprisingly the Shia struggled (with considerable success) to retain independence for their educational institutions and were also skeptical of Pan-Arabism. The latter, they feared, ultimately implied union with Syria and the consequent creation of a Sunni majority. Whatever Shia sympathy there was for the Ba'ath, it was gone by the 1970s, especially because Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, dependent on the army and preparing to attack Iran, liquidated most Shia in the party leadership and then deported two hundred thousand Iraqi Shia as "Iranian fifth columnists."

The Shia and the Kurds face the same dilemma: how to build an opposition against a totalitarian regime that tolerates only one notion of what Iraq should be. Moreover, enemies of Baghdad have been happy to use Iraqi dissidents for their own purposes; *al-Da'awa* ("The Call"), the Shia fundamentalist political organization, is financed by Teheran; Ankara extends friendship to Iraqi Kurds partly to exploit them against

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Turkey's Kurds; and Syria seeks defecting Iraqi Ba'athists to use against Saddam. At the same time Saddam's atrocities against Kurds and the Shia intensify loyalties among these two groups to everything except an Iraqi state. Add to this unhappy picture the disintegration of liberated Kurdistan in northern Iraq and the fear of Sunni Arabs that they will be victimized in a post-Ba'ath Iraq (thus they see Saddam as protector), and it doesn't bode well for those few brave souls who would like to see their country united but democratic and tolerant. If ever a country was at a historical impasse, it is Iraq.

Egypt's Christians

Cairo was traditionally Baghdad's rival for leadership of the Arab world. In Egypt we find an interesting, and strikingly different, story when it comes to minorities. Islam is Egypt's state religion and some 90 percent of the population is Sunni, although precise statistics are hard to come by. Coptic Christians, Egypt's chief minority, number three to four million according to official estimates, but the church estimates eight million and others speak of twelve million (out of a total Egyptian population of approximately sixty million).

Tensions between Copts and Muslims today are intense, but this should not obscure the fact that Copts once played a major role in Egyptian politics, beginning with the struggle for independence. Indeed, Copts were overrepresented in the Wafd which, from its 1919 challenge to British rule until Nasser's 1952 revolution, was the country's major political party. A Copt was number two in its hierarchy for years. But Nasser turned Egypt upside down. He nationalized foreign interests and this especially affected the Copts, whose urban middle classes played prominent middleman roles. The Copt educational system was integrated into the (generally more backward) state system and the church itself, with its proud traditions dating to the early Christian era, was subordinated to a narrow bureaucracy. Leading figures of Nasser's Egypt were mostly staunch Muslims, although an unknown and generally disdained Copt, Kamal Ramzi Stino, was given decorative cabinet portfolios.

It is not surprising that Copts felt marginalized, all the more so given the regime's often xenophobic rhetoric on behalf of Arab and Islamic unity. Urban Copts tended more toward cosmopolitanism and a loyalty to Egypt per se; they are at home with an Egyptianism that includes the land's pre-Islamic and Pharonic components, not Pan-Arabism. Nasser's Jacobin state sought uniformity and abolished the Christian quota in parliament on the grounds of the "oneness" of the "Arab people of Egypt."

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1970s raised new, important questions about this "oneness." When Anwar Sadat became president in 1970, following Nasser's death, he sought to counterbalance Nasserist and leftist challengers by encouraging Islamic movements. To curry favor with fundamentalists, he frustrated Coptic efforts to build new churches. Sadat defeated his foes, but only by initiating a process that would eventually lead to murderous attacks by fundamentalists on Copts—and then on tourists, police, army recruits, and on Sadat himself. In the meantime, Coptic religious authorities sought to enhance their standing in the country by taking a radical position against the Egypt-Israel peace process (even though Boutrous Boutrous Ghali, a Copt, was then minister of state for foreign affairs, and played a central role in the negotiations). This seems to have had little impact.

Egypt's political world has become increasingly Islamicized, with quotes from the Quran serving to proclaim what is good and what is bad. This leaves little room for the Copts, indeed for any non-Islamic minority. In the November 1995 elections only a few Copts ran and all lost. These pressures—from Nasserism to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism—led Copts to look to their church as their sole shelter. Now, however, there are additional, perilous trends within: a rise of Copt migration to the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, and a move by some Copts in Egypt from their "national" church into "alien" (Catholic or Protestant) churches. This represents a search for new lives and identities that may, in the long run, augur poorly for this minority's future.

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The Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Arab-Israeli conflict exacerbated the problems of minorities in several Arab lands. At first glance, it might seem that Israel, a state built by a long-time minority, might serve as a democratic example for the region. The opposite was the case. The uprooting of the Palestinians wounded the Arab sense of self. Israel's accent on its Jewishness and its reduction to second-class status of the Palestinians who remained within its borders added insult to injury. Finally, Israel's successive military victories and the post-1967 occupation turned it into an absolute evil in humiliated Arab eyes.

All this provided easy pretexts for reactionary ideas and behavior among the Arabs. One might even say it encouraged powerful false equations to take subconscious hold in much of the Arab world. Democracy, the West, and "minoritarianism"—these meant Israel, something that exists at Arab expense. So, in turn, Arab masses deeply mistrusted democracy and mistreated their own minorities, some of whom didn't conceal their sympathy for Israel (for example, Iraqi Kurds and Lebanese Christians worked with Israel on various occasions; most Jews in the Arab world were gone by the mid-1950s). After each military defeat, fanatics among the Arabs imposed more restrictions on their own minorities. The "wisdom" behind this was simple: if you cannot avenge yourself on Israel, strike a weaker substitute.

Looking across the Arab world, it is evident that many of its minorities are eroding, either physically or politically. Minority elites are scattering to Western capitals where some become integrated and others feel lost. One lesson from the last half century may well be that Arab-Israeli peace is a necessary condition for the well-being of Mideast minorities, but it isn't enough. After all, the situation of the Copts has deteriorated since the Camp David accords. The complicated stories of Israel and Lebanon reveal that calls for democracy, however important, are also insufficient. Israel shows how fanaticism can materialize within democracy and Lebanon shows that democracy in one country cannot bring salvation to the Mideast—or thrive in isolation.

Still, what's needed is the spread of a democratic virus throughout the Mideast; this is the antidote to intolerant majoritarianism, to viewing any self-expression by a minority as a form of dissidence. A vast transformation is required, as much in the consciousness of the region's inhabitants as in its institutions. For it to take hold, there needs to be a metamorphosis in political culture as well. A democratic virus, a transformation, a metamorphosis—it is this combination that will allow Mideast minorities to flourish. And also the majorities. □

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Aliza Marcus

TURKEY, THE KURDS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Men with video cameras were waiting at the entrance to Cizre, a rundown city in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. The cameras rolled when police pulled me out of the car and checked my bags, my body, and my press card. Behind me was a mile-long line of cars waiting to go through the same process. "We find that videotaping people is useful," said the genial policeman assigned to check my moves. "We started at soccer games and now we want to do it all the time. This way if something happens we can round up suspects more easily."

Inside Cizre, a city of squat, dirty concrete buildings, there didn't appear to be many potential suspects around. Most everyone had cleared off the streets when special forces with black masks over their faces took up position on rooftops. For added security, armored personnel carriers had blocked off side streets. It was five days before last winter's general elections in Turkey, and rumor had it the pro-Kurdish People's Labor party (HADEP) was coming to town.

It was not exactly a lively campaign in the southeast, where separatist Kurdish rebels have been battling Turkish soldiers. Security forces were not keen on the pro-Kurdish party, which was favored to sweep the region in the December vote for Parliament. And candidates were not keen on going out to meet their constituents. Some were put off by the rooftop marksmen. Others felt it was too dangerous to leave the main roads. Those who did make it to their potential voters regretted it later, after security forces warned people that a vote for HADEP meant that the village would be burned down.

The party's platform was at the root of the problem. With its calls for equal rights for Kurds as a separate ethnic group and its complaints about massive human rights abuses by security forces against civilians in the region, it was downright revolutionary. Mainstream Turkish political parties were still wavering over whether or not to admit that there is a Kurdish ethnic group in Turkey—or whether this question matters.

The Turkish authorities probably thought they had stifled this Kurdish problem back in 1994, when the constitutional court shut down the pro-Kurdish Democracy party. Its thirteen deputies were kicked out of Parliament and the seven who did not flee abroad were tried for alleged links to the rebels. The party later reconstituted itself as HADEP. Perhaps its greatest competition among Kurds came from the pro-Islamic Welfare party, which said the army could be replaced by an Islamic brotherhood that would treat all citizens equally as long as they were Muslims (which most Kurds are).

HADEP had no real chance. It managed to win twenty-three seats in the region, but failed to garner 10 percent of the national vote to qualify for Parliament. This was not such a shock considering that Kurds make up perhaps 15 percent of Turkey's sixty million people (the country does not collect statistics on its minorities). What was a shock was that the Islamists came in first nationwide, albeit with 21 percent. They did well for all the classic reasons: people were tired of the ruling parties' unkept promises to fix the staggering economy; Welfare had set up an enviable social welfare network and Islamist mayors were said not to wallow in corruption. The Welfare party also capitalized on Kurdish discontent. Kurds who did not vote for HADEP by and large voted for the Islamists. Kurds preferred

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Welfare to the other parties precisely because it is not obsessed with Turkish nationalism and because the southeast is still a stronghold of traditional Islam. Welfare is the one party that has not been part of any government since the end of the last period of military rule (1980-1983). The party could thus honestly say it was not responsible for repressive policies toward the Kurds. In power, though, it might not act much different from previous governments. With only 21 percent of the vote, it would need a coalition partner to govern, leaving it dependent on the other party's views. There's also the army, which is traditionally suspicious of a whiff of Islam in politics — and is known for staging coups when it feels its vision of Turkey is under threat (there were three between 1960 and 1980). A Welfare coalition would not want to raise the ire of the army, and the army is more interested in new weaponry than Kurdish reform.

And the other parties? Consider the first coalition that came out of elections (it collapsed in June). Conservative party leader Mesut Yilmaz joined up with former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, a darling of the West who last year convinced Europe that Turkey's human rights record should not prevent it from joining a customs union with the European Union. Like every other government, the coalition had promised to make changes in the southeast.

But in Turkey deeds often fall far short of promises. The government had few liberals in it. It did have many hawks, including the former general chief of staff, the former governor for emergency rule in the southeast, and the former Istanbul police chief—who last year publicly threatened the government minister for human rights. If Kurds needed another sign, it came during the first cabinet meeting, when ministers voted to extend the state of emergency in the southeast. And so the Kurdish problem, which exploded anew in 1984 when the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) started fighting for control of the southeast, was again relegated domestically to the occasional think-piece by a newspaper columnist and the faxed complaints of human rights monitors.

Internationally, however, Turkey's Kurdish conflicts are not so invisible. The European Parliament almost turned down the customs union with Ankara last year because of human rights abuses. Various European leaders have called on Turkey to ease up limits on freedom of expression. Even the U.S. State Department (Washington supplies most of the army's major hardware) says that serious human rights violations are occurring in the southeast, where at least twenty thousand people have died since the PKK took up arms.

Still, the issue is not so much what is happening outside the country, but what is going on inside. The Turks are undecided about what to do with the Kurds, who have been in a state of unrest since the republic was founded in 1923. Some Turks talk of "our citizens of Kurdish origin," others refer to the need for "first-class treatment" to those who feel "second-class," and almost everyone speaks of "terrorism." But few talk of the Kurds as Kurds.

It's really no surprise that most people are silent. Strict restrictions on freedom of expression make most discussion—that is, talk contrary to Ankara's position—against the law. People have been put on trial for saying Turkey oppresses the Kurds, for interviewing PKK rebels, for saying the Kurds should have an independent state, and for writing about army abuses against civilians. Mainstream newspapers usually figure it's safer to ignore the issue than face being labeled a traitor. Journalists who step out of bounds sometimes have their copy changed.

Those who still dare are put on trial. Among the most celebrated recent cases was the conviction of Yasar Kemal, perhaps the country's most famous author, who accused Turkey of both abusing Kurds and lying about it. Columnist Ahmet Altan received a suspended sentence for a satire imagining that Ataturk, the revered founder of the republic, had been a Kurd and it was Turks who were oppressed. And I was put on trial last fall for a Reuters article that described soldiers throwing Kurds out of their villages. I was acquitted, but the point was made. Nobody is safe from Turkish law.

This is one reason why the December elections were so important to Kurds. It was the chance to throw their lot into the legal, democratic arena—again. Twelve years of the rebel

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war had worn down many Kurds. Some 2,500 villages—about 20 percent of the region's settlements—lie empty, usually because security personnel forced the people out. Thousands of activists, among them leading businessmen, lawyers, journalists, and local officials, have been mysteriously murdered. Perhaps two million people have been made refugees in their own country.

Unfortunately, the Kurds discovered that the political arena was a closed one. Yet again, the rebels were left as the only force fighting for Kurdish rights. This was probably good news for the PKK, which started to lose active support two years ago when then-Premier Tansu Ciller gave the army a free hand to sweep the region. When they swept, they took a lot of people and villages with them. The guerrillas retreated to hit-and-run attacks from the mountains. It wasn't that the PKK got weaker—there is no dearth of volunteers—but civilians grew weary of aiding them. Giving bread to the rebels was an easy way to end up in prison or dead. Those who did not flee their villages made it clear to the rebels that they were no longer welcome.

The PKK is also tiring of the guerrilla war. The heady days of the early 1990s, when the rebels could move freely in various cities, are finished. So are PKK promises to "liberate" the Kurdish southeast. The overwhelming military superiority of the Turkish army—coupled with ruthless methods—has shown that the rebels cannot win on the battlefield. Then again, neither can the army. Clashes have declined, but troop numbers have stayed the same. Huge swaths of the southeast are now kept empty. It's the best way to keep the rebels out.

Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader, is not a man to be admired. He runs a tight, Stalin-inspired force that kills Turkish teachers, families of the state-paid Kurdish militia and so-called traitors with impunity. Right now he would like nothing more than to negotiate with Ankara. Ankara isn't interested, so he says: no problem, talk to other Kurdish groups. But of course there aren't any. So just make reforms, Ocalan says, and allow the Kurds to be Kurds. The response is silence.

For all the talk of the rebels, the issue is not the PKK alone. The guerrillas get their backing because people are tired of being oppressed—and because nonviolent opposition to government policies is banned. Turkey insists that the Kurds are unhappy because of the region's poverty—but of course there are lots of impoverished areas that have not risen up against the state. Ankara says all citizens are equal, but only Turks (and foreigners) have the right to study in their mother tongue. The regime says Kurds can play their own music, but try to apply for a spot in a state cultural festival as a Kurdish music group. The government says there is no oppression, but tell that to someone who just spent a year in prison for writing that the Kurds are oppressed.

The Kurdish problem is, first and foremost, that Kurds want to be Kurds. They want the right to have Kurdish-language television and radio broadcasts, Kurdish-language education, and to have their folklore recognized as distinctly Kurdish. Second, there is the issue of human rights. Although abuses like torture and mysterious killings occur throughout the country, everything is much worse in the southeast. Finally it is a question of political structure—will Kurds accept a unitary state, or do they want autonomy, a federation, or even independence?

The real problem, though, is Turkey. Since World War I, when the western allied powers tried to carve up the remains of the Ottoman Empire, Turks have been wary of claims on their territory. When the republic was founded in 1923, Kemal Ataturk (which means father of the Turks) laid great weight on the Turkish "national identity" in order to hold the country together. Unluckily, there were also non-Turks in Turkey. The new regime confronted this fact by promulgating laws that equated expressions of Kurdish ethnic identity with attempts to overthrow the state.

This worked well, up to a point. After several uprisings between 1925 and 1938 were crushed, Kurdish activists tried alternative newspapers and cultural groups. The papers and groups were shut down and the leaders put on trial. It wasn't until the late 1960s that a Turkish party (in this case, the Socialist party) recognized something called the Kurdish problem. By the 1970s, the leftist fashion for armed revolution had spread to the Kurds. The mili-

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tary rulers of 1980-1983 (the third coup in as many decades) quickly did away with all this by banning everything and arresting hundreds of thousands.

The PKK managed to evade the crackdown. It wasn't hard. There was no dearth of bordering countries interested in backing a group that could destabilize Turkey. Hence the group's close ties with Syria and, at various times, Iran, Iraq, and the former Soviet Union. They also got a boost from Ankara: by banning all Kurdish organizations, Turkey established the PKK as the leading—that is, the only—Kurdish organization.

But Kurdish frustration with the PKK is mounting. Some have shed the traditional Marxist-Leninist outlook that long marked opposition to the state and they shy away from an organization that still speaks of socialist revolution. They also think the rebel war is backfiring. Traditional Kurdish village life has been decimated and leading Kurdish activists have been killed (usually by forces that get at least passive backing from the security apparatus).

This does not mean these Kurds don't like the idea of independence, or a new type of government that would give Kurds autonomy in the southeast. Nor does this mean they think the rebels can be ignored. But they are tired of the point being made from the barrel of an AK-47. They would like to talk about it. But they don't know what to do.

Ankara could give them a hand. For years there has been talk in Turkey of devolving power to local authorities, meaning that teachers, state health workers and other officials would be appointed by provinces instead of by Ankara. Properly implemented, this would give Kurds some responsibility for their own affairs. The new government has also promised to lift the state of emergency in the region. It's something promised for years—and it's open to debate what this would mean in practical terms—but it would be a sign of confidence.

Not that these steps alone would end the rebels' monopoly on the Kurdish problem. To succeed there, Turkey would have to lift restrictions on freedom of expression. It would have to do away with laws that ban ethnic-based political parties. To be even more effective, it could fund Kurdish cultural programs and permit Kurdish-language education. Police could be prosecuted for torture (although some say this might leave the country short of policemen) and soldiers could be punished for opening fire on villages. In other words, it could try democracy and respect for human rights.

This would not get rid of the PKK. But it could make them superfluous. In a free Turkey, the rebels would be no match for the politicians. Such changes are never easy—certainly not in a country built on the mythology that all its citizens are Turks. But it's a better solution, and certainly more effective, than bloodshed. □

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Alex Weingrod

PALESTINIAN ISRAELIS?

My friend Mustafa likes to tell the story of the mystified Egyptian hotel clerk. On his first trip to Egypt, the clerk at Mustafa's hotel asked for his passport. Mustafa duly handed over his Israeli passport, at which point the clerk called out in disbelief, "An Israeli passport? You are an Israeli? How can that be? You speak Arabic, you are an Arab, how can you possibly be Israeli?" Mustafa looked back at him: "Wallah, I was born forty years ago, and when I opened my eyes I was in Israel. I was born there, what can I do, I'm an Israeli."

It's a complex fate, being an Israeli Arab. Which identity comes first, Arab or Israeli? How, or at what price, can one be both?

There are three groups in this puzzle, and we will be concerned with only one of them. In the first group are the Palestinian Arabs and their descendants who remained in Israel following the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. They are Israeli citizens with full political and civil rights—just like other Israelis, they vote in elections and can be elected to the Knesset, and in principle they have all of the rights and duties of Israel's Jewish citizens with the major exception of compulsory Army service. In 1948 their population numbered about 160,000; the figure today is roughly 900,000 (the Israeli Jewish population is about 4.2 million). The majority (about 80 percent) are Muslim, while the rest are Christian and Druze.

In the second group are Palestinian Arabs living on the West Bank and Gaza; although they were under Israeli military rule for almost three decades they are not Israeli citizens, and in almost all cases they have Jordanian passports. This group numbers about two million persons, and most are now part of Yasir Arafat's state-in-the-making Palestinian Authority.

And there is still a third category: following the Six Day War in 1967 the city of Jerusalem was formally annexed to Israel, and the 150,000 or so Palestinians who now reside there are subject to Israeli law while they continue to be citizens of Jordan. Complicated? Certainly, but this is the Middle East, where, as everyone likes to say, nothing is simple.

This article is exclusively concerned with the first category—the Arabs and their descendants who remained in Israel after 1948 and who have therefore been an Israeli minority for the past three generations. As Israeli citizens they enjoy rights that presumably are the same as those of Israeli Jews. Yet in the Jewish state they are by no means equal to Jews. Their paradoxical situation (by no means unique among minorities in modern nations) is one in which their alienation grows together with what can properly be called their cultural assimilation.

A basic duality runs through the society: Jews and Arabs live in separate communities (Jewish Tel Aviv was build alongside of Arab Jaffa, there is both an Arab and Jewish Nazareth, and "mixed" city neighborhoods hardly exist), each attends separate schools taught in different languages, just as matters of marriage, divorce, and family are decided by separate Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious courts and officials. If, with regard to Jewish immigrants from Western and Middle Eastern countries, Israeli policy has always aimed at dissolving cultural differences in order to achieve "integration," precisely the opposite holds for Jewish-Arab relations: each lives in separate, segregated communities that are expected to remain distinct from each other.

The social changes that have taken place dur-

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ing the past five decades are impressive. What fifty years ago was a feudal peasant society has in large measure become modernized—most Israeli Arab males are now employed across the economy in semiskilled or skilled industrial, construction, and service tasks, and an ever-growing number of Arab women have also joined the workforce. Similarly, as incomes and education rise a growing number have begun to pursue professional careers—to cite notable examples, Arab judges sit on leading courts, an Arab surgeon performs organ transplants, and there are sizable numbers of Arab teachers, nurses, and social workers.

During the past several decades local public services—schools, clinics, hospitals, water, electricity, and sewer systems—have also been provided or installed throughout the "Arab sector," but at a much lower (in some instances shockingly lower) level than for Jewish communities.

Similar trends can be witnessed with regard to political activity. Following the 1948 war the Arabs who remained in Israel were stunned by their defeat, dispirited and without effective leadership. Military government rule was imposed upon them; until it was finally abolished in 1966 their movements were restricted, and they lived under direct police and military control. Since then their political participation and self-confidence has certainly grown—Israeli Arabs have formed their own political parties as well as joining the major Israeli political parties, and their voting participation in local and national elections equals or is higher than among Israeli Jews. Religious fundamentalism has also been on the rise—just as it has been throughout the Middle East and among Israeli Jews.

Viewed from a perspective of nearly five decades and three generations, these changes suggest that many Arabs are increasingly connected within Israeli society. This has come about through a combination of economic forces, Israeli democracy, and the resilience and skill of the Arabs themselves. Their "Israelization" (to use the sociologist Sammy Smooha's term) means, among other things, that they have become "more Israeli" in appearance and comportment, watch some of the same television programs as Israeli Jews, and consequently share wider ranges of cultural understandings.

Inequalities

These are all impressive accomplishments—but they are only one part of the tale. Much has changed for Israeli Arabs: but much more has also changed for Israeli Jews. The key point is that by every measure (income, occupation, education, level of social services) the Arabs remain far behind the Jews. Arabs may now be employed "across the economy," but they are concentrated in lower level, lower paid occupations. Many live below what the government defines as the poverty line. In situations where Arabs and Jews work in the same firm the Jews almost inevitably control the higher status, higher income positions. Contrasts at the community level are stark and sometimes appalling. Many Jews live in modern communities that are affluent by any standard. Among Arabs, schools are overcrowded and often lack modern equipment, and local services such as sewers, roads, public health standards and, in rural areas, even electricity, continue to be substandard.

There is, in other words, a deep inequality between Israeli Jews and Arabs at both an individual and a group level. The reasons for this are not hard to find. A generation ago it might have been argued that inequalities existed because each started at a different point—Arabs began in a "traditional" society while Jews were already modern and advanced. But this argument (it is merely an apology) can hardly be considered relevant today. Inequalities exist primarily because in the Jewish state governments have always favored Jews over Arabs, no matter which party was in power. Both Likud and Labor government policies have allocated major resources to Jews rather than to Arabs. They have shared the view that the Jewish majority, for whom the state was created, must be firmly established and strengthened, while the Arab minority is a danger, a potential enemy whose true loyalties are in doubt, and who should therefore be kept weak. In a highly centralized state such as Israel this has made an enormous difference.

What is more, since their loyalties were thought dubious, Arabs were kept out of many positions on the grounds of "security," whether it be working for the government or teaching in a school. Prejudice is still another barrier—many

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members of the Jewish majority have strongly prejudiced views against the Arab minority. For all of these reasons the "structure of opportunity" is fundamentally unequal.

There is still another dimension to these issues: the fact that they are Arabs within the Jewish state poses major problems of accommodation. All of the state's symbols, national holidays, holy days, language, myths, and a great deal more, are drawn from Jewish history and experience. Israel was conceived in specifically Jewish memory, and although its Declaration of Independence promises equal civil and legal rights to non-Jews, they are obviously seen as minority groups living in the majority Jewish society. The fact that this is the precise reversal of Jewish experience in all of the diasporas for the past two thousand years was keenly understood by the state's founders; hence their concern for civil liberties for all.

However, this has become an increasingly difficult problem for members of the Arab minority: can they, as Arabs, identify themselves with the state that defines itself in specifically Jewish terms? Why must they and their children study the poetry of the Hebrew renaissance, and how are they to deal with the Holocaust? What about their own poets and history—why are they not celebrated and studied in the school curriculum? In examining this situation, Yoav Peled, a political scientist, has argued that Israeli Jews have in practice an exclusive claim to the "public good" (what he calls the "republican principle") while Arabs, a minority who cannot make that claim, are guaranteed equal citizenship rights (the "liberal principle"), and that in the circumstances of deep ethnic conflict this is "not the worst possible outcome" to the dilemmas of majority-minority, Arab-Jewish, relations.

Peled may be right—but this is little comfort to those Israeli Arabs who, despairing of the possibility of achieving equality and increasingly alienated, wish to reconsider their relationships with the Jewish majority. It is mainly for these reasons that some Israeli Arabs—mainly younger intelligentsia, professionals, and some politicians—have recently sought to redefine themselves as "Palestinian Israelis." What they (for example, Ahmad Tibi, a physician and politician, and Azmi Bishara, an academic elected to the Knesset this past May) are saying is that they are members of both the Palestinian nation and the Israeli state. They wish to assert *both* identities and allegiances and thereby to redefine their status within Israel.

Proponents of this view argue that they are loyal Israelis in every sense, but that as a minority in the Jewish state they have a right to their own "Palestinian nationhood," expressed in cultural and perhaps, in the end, political autonomy. Needless to say, these proposals make the Jewish majority nervous and suspicious. Political autonomy (in Galilee, for example, where Arabs are the majority) for Israeli Arabs? The issues are unlikely to disappear, even though they are often drowned out by the noise of conflict and violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

What of the future? Two recent developments may have important consequences. The first is political: Arabs now compose about 13 percent of the electorate, and in the recent voting their large turnout almost swung the election to Peres. Political mobilization has been a major means for gaining influence and resources for other Israeli minorities—Middle Eastern Jews and orthodox religious groups are notable examples—and Israeli Arabs may be able to follow the same path. The second is both legal and political. The Knesset recently passed laws that are meant to strengthen civil rights, and the Supreme Court has taken an activist position in disqualifying discrimination. These changes may have the effect of increasing equality between Jews and Arabs. Skillful and successful Arab politicians may bring real changes to their communities, and legal rulings may also open the system more widely to minorities.

But then, of course, the future will also depend on war or peace, conflict or some measure of understanding among Israel, the Palestinians, and other Arab states. Until now, the Arab minority and Jewish majority have managed to live together through five Israeli-Arab wars, the Palestinian intifada, and countless violent incidents and crises. The patterns established during the past five decades may be strong enough to withstand the conflicts still to come. The outlook is uncertain, but not without hope. □

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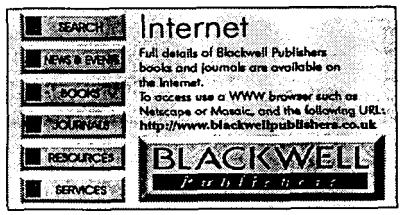

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Lisa Anderson

NORTH AFRICA: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

Minorities are always more important than their numbers might seem to merit for, if nothing more, they are society's bellwethers. Changes in their legal status and social roles reveal broader changes in a society. In North Africa the shrinking role of the Jewish communities and the new assertiveness of Berbers suggests that even as Islamist movements attempt to stem the tide, a profound shift is taking place in popular conceptions of politics and rights. No longer are minority status and rights defined simply by the patrimonially based protections embedded in religion, particularly Islam, or personal relationships. North African governments in the twenty-first century will have to face questions of cultural rights and linguistic recognition for which neither Islam nor secular Western liberalism have clear-cut answers.

The vast majority of North Africans are Muslim Arabs. For nearly a thousand years, the only significant indigenous minorities have been non-Arabic speaking Berbers and non-Muslim Jews. Estimates of the Berber population, which stretches from the Siwa oasis of Egypt to the Rif mountains of Morocco, vary considerably. None of the countries of the region report ethnic breakdown in their population statistics, and there is even dispute about how to define a Berber. Whether construed loosely as ethnic self-identification or more restrictively by mother tongue, Berbers constitute between 35 percent and 50 percent of Morocco's twenty-seven million people, most of them in rural areas, particularly the Atlas mountains. About 20 percent of Algeria's twenty-seven million people are Berbers, and they too are concentrated in mountainous regions. There are no more than a hundred thousand Berbers among Tunisia's eight million people and, apart from small ethnographic curiosities like the archaic villages of the South, they are almost completely assimilated.

The size of the Jewish communities of the Maghrib has declined dramatically during the twentieth century. After World War II, there were about 100,000 Jews in Tunisia, 175,000 in Algeria and 275,000 in Morocco. By the late 1970s, the Jewish community of Algeria had all but disappeared, while only five thousand Jews still lived in Tunisia and twenty thousand in Morocco.

Islamic Legacies

Berbers are descendants of the pre-Islamic inhabitants of North Africa. Arab penetration of North Africa began shortly after the death of Muhammad in the seventh century, when many Berbers adopted Islam, but it was not until the eleventh century that the Hilalian invasion ensured Muslim dominance and introduced large numbers of Arabs into the region. Berbers fled to the mountain redoubts and distant southern deserts where they remain concentrated today, leaving the Arab conquerors in control of the coastal plains and river valleys.

Jewish settlements also predated the Arab invasions; after the Spanish Inquisition, Jewish refugees settled with their co-religionists under Muslim protection in the cities and along the coasts of North Africa. Under Islamic law, Jews (and Christians) constitute a distinct social category, the *ahl al-kitab*, or "People of the Book." As such they are permitted to practice their religion, although their failure to recognize

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Muhammad's prophecy exacts some penalties, usually including extraordinary taxes.

If Jews were a distinct social category, Berbers were not. Islam does not formally recognize ethnic distinctions among believers, and although Arabic is accorded pride of place as the language in which God chose to reveal his message to the Prophet, all believers—no matter their native tongue—are thought to be equal in his eyes. Unlike the Arab East, where the Christian churches coincided with ethnic communities, ethnicity in North Africa did not give rise to national or community self-consciousness. Indeed, some of the most illustrious eras in the history of Muslim North Africa are associated with Berber dynasties.

European Legacies

The French invaded Algeria in 1830. They went on to occupy Tunisia in 1882 and, with Spain, Morocco in 1912. Everywhere the French occupiers met resistance, and everywhere they attempted to find and cultivate sympathizers in the indigenous populations. Local minorities were obvious candidates.

The French colonial administrations in North Africa made much of the differences between Arabs and Berbers, persuading themselves that Berber tribal councils exhibited a primitive democracy that predisposed them to European influence. Berbers from both Algeria and Morocco were disproportionately represented among the migrants to France and overrepresented among the educated elite, particularly the Francophone elite, during the interwar period.

Nonetheless, French colonial infatuation with the Berbers was largely unrequited. Hoping to further their influence among the Berbers of Morocco, in 1930 the French declared their intention to formally recognize Berber "customary law." The decree—known as the Berber *dahir*—was greeted with unanimous condemnation, and the effort to remove the Berbers from the jurisdiction of Islamic law courts was seen by Arab and Berber alike as a device to divide them and undermine Islam.

The ensuing protest created the framework for the nationalist movement and ensured that national unity would be equated with the defense of Islam. Berbers participated in the nationalist movements of both Morocco and Algeria. The migrants in France provided essential funding and logistical support; the Berber regions in Morocco and Algeria were among the most important military strongholds in the independence struggles.

The French had more success with the Jewish minorities of North Africa, who prospered under French colonialism. By 1870 nearly all Algerian Jews had been accorded French citizenship, and Jewish children had been granted privileged access to French-run schools throughout North Africa. Moreover, through their ties with their co-religionists, North African Jews enjoyed far better commercial relations with Europe than did the Muslims. Thus, virtually from the outset of the colonial period, Jews were far more likely than Muslims to be well-educated, conversant with European languages, and familiar with European political and cultural developments.

Although the nationalist movements of North Africa included prominent Jewish individuals, Jews as a whole did not join the struggle. Many had become French citizens, and many more had profited from the colonial regime and were loath to contribute to its demise. Among the politically progressive, many Jews were active in North African labor movements during the interwar period, but they found the Islamic cast of the nationalist movements both exclusionary and reactionary.

If all this were not enough to discourage Jewish participation in the anticolonial movements, the triumph of the Zionist cause in Palestine soon after the end of World War II provided yet another disincentive. Many Jews from rural areas emigated to Israel; wealthier urban Jews, who saw their property threatened in anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish disturbances, left for France, Italy, and Canada as well as the new Jewish state.

Independence: From Patronage to Protest

Independence brought new challenges for the minorities in North Africa. Now tensions among secular and religious, pluralist and nationalist conceptions of society came to the fore. Morocco

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and Tunisia were accorded independence in 1956 and, after a revolutionary war that cost more than a million lives, Algeria won its independence in 1962.

In Morocco, the early years of independence were marked by competition for leadership between the monarch—Muhammad V, father of the current King Hassan II—and the nationalist *Istiqlal* party. The king's widespread popularity, particularly in predominantly Berber rural areas, contributed to his victory over the urban-based nationalists. By the time King Hassan acceded to the throne in 1961, the monarchy had established its primacy over the *Istiqlal*—in part by encouraging competing parties, such as the loyalist *Mouvement Populaire*, a party best known for its ties to elite Berber families. Thus, although some of the most notorious opponents of the Moroccan kings have been Berbers—including the foiled plotters of several coup attempts in the early 1970s—so have some of their closest associates, including much of the officer corps.

In Algeria, revolutionary fervor quickly deteriorated into the "*luttes de clans*." Several of the "historic leaders" of the revolution were Berbers and one, Hocine Ait Ahmed, started his own underground party when he fell out with President Ahmed Ben Bella shortly after independence. Although the party, the *Front des Forces Socialistes* (FFS), aimed to challenge the ruling *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN), its constituency remained largely confined to Ait Ahmed's followers in the Kabyle.

Berber politics remained embedded in the patronage systems of both Morocco and Algeria until the 1970s. At that time, the governments attempted to impose stricter standards for the use of Arabic in place of French in government and education. Most Berbers in Morocco and Algeria, particularly well-educated Berbers, are Francophone; however laudable the motives of the Arabization campaigns from the vantage point of anticolonialism and national unity, the Berbers found them discriminatory.

By 1980, discontent with the Arabization campaigns erupted in demonstrations in Algeria's Kabyle, in what came to be known as the "Berber spring." A semi-clandestine organization, the *Mouvement Culturel Berbère*, appeared to safeguard Berber cultural heritage; when multiparty politics were authorized in 1989, it created the *Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democratie* (RCD), to advocate both "*la berberité*" and liberal politics.

Perhaps ironically, of the several dozen political parties that appeared during Algeria's short-lived democratic experiment, Ait Ahmed's FFS and the RCD were probably the most seriously committed to democratic politics, refusing the "Berber party" label and attempting to foster support for human rights and the rule of law. It was, however, precisely their base among the Berbers that animated their interest in securing cultural pluralism through a secular state and liberal democracy, and that ultimately risked tarnishing the broader agenda with the appearance of parochialism.

The histories of the Jewish communities of Morocco and Tunisia after independence also demonstrated the sometimes ironic dilemmas facing minorities in North Africa. At independence, the countries of the region all declared Islam the state religion, but Tunisia and Morocco declared that the Jews would be protected as national minorities. They permitted the dwindling Jewish communities to retain property, hold religious services, and reside as full citizens in their countries, and the Moroccan king repeatedly invited Jewish emigrants to return to Morocco.

In part this attention to the Jewish minority reflected government interest in its disproportionately prosperous, well-educated and well-connected members—precisely the sort of citizens all developing countries need. Perhaps more important, however, "protection" of the Jewish community was part of the image the governments wished to project to their own citizens and to the outside world. For Habib Bourguiba, leader of the nationalist movement and president of Tunisia from 1956 until his deposition in 1987, the capacity to accommodate Jews symbolized his government's enlightenment and modernity. Although the official religion of Tunisia was Islam, Bourguiba himself was a secularist to the core, and he used every opportunity to advance the cause of secular enlightenment. Thus he abolished all religious courts, Muslim and Jewish

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alike. He exhorted his citizens to forgo fasting during Ramadhan, one of the five major obligations of observant Muslims, in favor of hard work in the service of development. He was an early proponent of accommodation with Israel, arguing in the mid-1960s that Arab opposition to Israel was self-defeating. For Bourguiba, the continued presence of the Jewish community confirmed his secularist vision of Tunisia.

For the Moroccan kings, protection of the Jewish community served a different but equally important purpose. As the "Commander of the Faithful," the Moroccan king is obliged to protect the "People of the Book" in his realm. Having maintained the Muslim religious court system for questions of personal status, the Moroccan Ministry of Justice also kept rabbinical courts in operation. Indeed, King Hassan interpreted his obligation to his Jewish subjects to mean that he had an interest in the well-being of Israelis of Moroccan origin, and this interest was an important element in his special relationship with Israel during the 1960s and 1970s. To the king, the health of the Moroccan Jewish community confirms his legitimacy as patron and protector of his subjects.

As their fifth decade of independence approaches, the governments of North Africa face economic and political challenges that will severely test their commitments to—even their definitions of—minority communities. The need for economic restructuring after years of overspending has created fiscal crises that even the oil producers cannot solve. The regimes are pursuing economic privatization policies that will deprive them of some of their official and informal capacity to counter discrimination, since neither regulation nor patronage will be as easily available to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Although both Berbers and Jews have been important critics of the governments and advocates of human rights, when faced with the choice between the governments and their often extremist opponents, they have thus far cast their lot with the governments. The principal political oppositionists, the Islamist movements, have not exhibited much sympathy for minorities. They are vocal supporters of Arabization, both because Arabic is Islam's sacred language and because many of their followers are relatively poorly educated Arabic speakers who stand to gain if job placements favor Arabic literacy. As a result, although there are Berbers among the Islamists, there are many more who oppose the Islamist agenda and support the governments' crackdown. Similarly, few Islamist leaders have adopted King Hassan's view of the responsibility of the Commander of the Faithful for protecting the People of the Book; far more frequent are expressions of the sort of overt anti-Semitism more conventionally associated with European than with North African history.

If Islamists come to power in North Africa, it will spell the end of the remaining Jewish communities in the region, but those communities may be fast disappearing remnants of another age in any event. The trust the Moroccan Jewish community has placed in King Hassan is intimately tied to the king's personal commitment to an anachronistic patrimonial style of rule. Perhaps less self-evident are the challenges to an Islamist government that would come from a Berber community no longer content to participate through patronage networks but committed to recognition of group rights in a pluralistic society. □

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George Packer

ETHIOPIA'S PRISONERS OF BLOOD

Addis Ababa

"I have come back here to die," Desta Abdissa told me in Addis Ababa, "and the sooner the better." Desta is an Oromo, the largest of Ethiopia's eighty ethnic groups, comprising as much as half the population. He comes from Wallega in the west, born into the generation of students that rose up against feudalism, intoxicated itself on Marxism, and was in turn nearly destroyed by communist dictatorship and factional fighting. He has been jailed eight times, the first as a teenager under Haile Selassie, thereafter by the Dergue, the military council that overthrew the emperor. He was tortured until half his body became temporarily paralyzed, and once he was forced to endure his own mock execution.

In the early eighties Desta (the name means "happiness") slipped out of Ethiopia, first for Kenya, then England. He left behind the continent's most brutal tyranny under Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam—at war with two rebellious armies in the north, slaughtering thousands of suspected political opponents and causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of peasants by famine and forced resettlement. He spent over a decade in exile.

A few months ago Desta returned to Ethiopia with a doctorate in social anthropology from the University of London and the nihilistic air of a desperado. He had become an Oromo nationalist.

The Ethiopia he came back to live, teach, and die in is now under the control of a victorious northern rebel group, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). With the same single-minded discipline that destroyed a far larger Soviet-supplied army, since 1991 the TPLF has written a Constitution dividing Ethiopia into autonomous ethnic regions and granting them the theoretical right to secede, and held a series of uncontested and widely criticized elections. The Tigrayans, ancient rivals of the historically dominant Amharas, now monopolize power, not just at the center but all over Ethiopia through satellite ethnic parties the TPLF set up in each of the new regions. In the Oromo region, the government's party is the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, or OPDO, which supporters say will win over the Oromo by bringing schools, seeds, development. Critics regard the OPDO as papier-maché nationalism that has only inflamed "genuine Oromos" against the government.

In the country's ethnic equation, the Oromo have always been overlooked and despised. But now the Oromo question has violently emerged as the key to the country's survival.

Alone in Africa, Ethiopia was never colonized (Fascist Italy occupied it from 1936 to 1941), and as a result the relation between its ethnic groups is unique. In 1896, Emperor Menelik rewarded the *neftanya*, or gunmen, who had repelled an Italian invasion at Adowa, by making them landlords over the pagan Oromo in the newly conquered south. Oromos didn't merely lose their land: their language, unrelated to Amharic, and their culture acquired second-class status. Yet Amhara aristocrats also married their daughters to the sons of Oromo chiefs. Oromos were neither left alone nor wiped out. They were absorbed into the Orthodox Christian Abyssinian empire. Amharicization became

Some of the names in this article have been changed to protect the people involved.

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the formula for survival and success.

In the century that followed, ethnic division has been concealed under a variety of unifying ideas, and you can see them all if you stand in what was once called Maskal Square, after 1974 renamed Abiot or Revolution Square, which is what the minibus touts still shout at passengers. The square itself is actually a vast dirt amphitheater, now overrun by flocks of sheep. A huge grimy arch still spans Jomo Kenyatta Avenue, with the communist star at its peak. Here, beneath towering, long-gone portraits of Marx, Lenin, and himself, Colonel Mengistu presided over mass celebrations of the 1974 revolution and once smashed bottles of red-dyed water to show what the revolution had in store for its enemies. On the other side of the square, from a wooded hill, a loudspeaker intones prayers as the Christian faithful, shrouded in white, gather at the gate of Stefanos Orthodox Church. Farther up the hill stands a modern glass tower called Africa Hall, which houses the continent's major United Nations commissions and whose stained-glass windows depict African suffering and triumph. Haile Selassie's residential palace is just across Menelik II Avenue, named after the founder of modern Ethiopia, who in turn drew his name from the son of Solomon and Sheba, supposed progenitor of the imperial lineage. Menelik's mausoleum and palace stand just over the crest of the hill.

To Bind or Tear?

Solomonic dynasty, Orthodox Church, Pan-Africanism, revolution: none of these ideas had held Ethiopia together, and in 1991, when the *Woyane*, the Tigrayan teenagers with Kalashnikovs and rags tied around their wild hair, marched into Addis Ababa, their leaders had already decided on another idea for the country they had just liberated. Ethiopian history has always swung violently between centralization and rebellion. These rebels knew something about the power of the center—with Soviet airplanes it had laid waste to their region. Instead of burying ethnic differences in Africa's most diverse country, the new regime would acknowledge them, emphasize them, enshrine them in the Constitution. Ethnic politics would either bind the wasted country together or finally tear it to pieces. It was a gamble, and a paradox of sorts. One couldn't imagine a monument in Abiot Square that the government might raise to Regionalism.

Ethnic autonomy on paper has produced ethnic conflict on the ground. "What you hear and see," Desta Abdissa and many others warned me, "what things seem and are, have nothing to do with each other." At its simplest, the political landscape has divided into three camps. There is the ruling coalition, backed by the United States, led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and dominated by Tigrayans—barely 10 percent of the population—which has all the political power and most of the energy as well, governing through its satellite parties with the rhetoric of democracy, self-determination, and agricultural development. (Opponents say the TPLF has imposed a dictatorship every bit as repressive as, but much subtler than, Mengistu's.) There is the old political class, dominated by Amharas (30 percent of the population), which calls for "genuine" democracy, an end to ethnic politics, and a return to Ethiopian unity amid warnings about another Rwanda or Yugoslavia. (Opponents say this means an Ethiopia dominated by Amharas, as it has been throughout its modern history.) And there are the armed political movements of the country's other ethnic groups, most important the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which regards both Tigrayans and Amharas as "Abyssinian colonialists," Ethiopia itself as a dubious concept, and calls for "genuine self-determination up to and including secession." (Opponents say the OLF is simply fighting for power since it has already been offered democracy and self-determination, which it refused to take part in.)

The three camps are static and mutually hostile. Compromise is regarded as collaboration. The arguments themselves are rarely engaged but more likely dismissed with stale slogans and charges of bad faith. "People are not discussing issues," Merera Gudina, a political scientist at Addis Ababa University, told me. "They simply give you their version of the story. You have the Amhara version, the Oromo version, the Tigrayan version, and probably you are left with nothing. Three versions that clash with each other and cancel each other out." Merera should know. An Oromo, he has written articles advocating

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rapprochement with other ethnic groups in a common democratic opposition. The Amhara elite have claimed him as one of their own, Oromo newspapers launched personal attacks ("His ideas are nothing," an Oromo nationalist told me, "and he is nothing"), and one government supporter dismissed him as an anachronism from left-wing student days. Merera himself implied to me that, instead of debate, his articles will lead to the least promising of Ethiopian outcomes—another political faction.

Maps and Identities

In the current stalemate, the most basic questions and facts remain in dispute. Is Ethiopia more free than ever in its history or is it a cleverly disguised police state? Did the OLF recently kill 581 TPLF soldiers in Oromia or is the region peaceful? Is there a war going on in Ethiopia? Where would the borders of an Oromo republic be drawn? Is the ethnic identity of most Ethiopians mixed? Is Ethiopia's history three thousand years old, as pan-Ethiopianists say, or a hundred, as Oromo nationalists say? Were the Amhara pushed by Oromo pastoralists out of central Ethiopia into the northern highlands several hundred years ago or did Emperor Menelik invade and set up his capital at the end of the nineteenth century in what had always been Oromo land? Is the woman sitting in the corner of the hotel bar a security informer, a prostitute, or both?

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Sooner or later, most conversations about Ethiopia lead to a map. There, presumably, is where the truth can be found. Tecola Hagos, a former member of the government who quit and exiled himself to Massachusetts over the TPLF's authoritarian practices, sat with me in his Cambridge apartment and took out his new book on the failure of Ethiopian democracy. Ethiopia appeared on its cover as a solid green shape, including Eritrea, which became independent in 1993. "First you have to acknowledge the individual is paramount. Start with that. But it was the other way with Meles. You draw the faces first"—Tecola began dotting the green shape with his capped pen, each dot a human face—"all over Ethiopia. Then, with a faint pen, you draw the map"—lightly he sketched the ethnic boundaries—"with a *faint* pen. O.K., it could help give you a sense of identity and pride, an acknowledgment of who you are. But Meles is trying to draw faces in the regions. There are no faces that can fit this way."

At his home in Addis Ababa, Andreas Eshete, an Amhara philosopher who has become an adviser to the government, pointed to a map of the new ethnic regions and said, "Collective identities will not go away. They haven't gone away anywhere in Africa. If individual rights were the only basis it would make for much greater division. You'd have this enormous backlog of nationalist questions. Every group would say, "Why haven't you put this in the Constitution?" As for the map's lines, Eshete said, they were based on a survey done by the Institute of Nationalities under Mengistu and generally considered to be accurate. And the Oromo nationalists I met, who have become the government's number one enemy, seem to have little quarrel with the government's map—after all, it gives the Oromo a huge chunk of southern Ethiopia.

But Merera Gudina, the Oromo political scientist, brought out the same map in his office at the university to show all the complications that would follow if Oromia became independent. "The Southern Group says we were swallowed

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by Oromo—they would be cut off by Oromia. The Somalis claim land up to Nazret. The Amhara claim the Oromo pushed them into the highlands. The Oromo will not be a beneficiary of an all-fronts war with eighty ethnic groups. If Oromo is serious about an Oromia republic, the country will turn into a madhouse."

On my first day in Ethiopia, at the lunch where I met Desta Abdissa, a topographic map was fastened to the wall by our host, Getachew Kumsa, an Oromo economist from Desta's hometown and a supporter of the government. When Desta was a raw young student in Addis in the early seventies, Getachew guided his intellectual development in Marxism—he was not only Desta's mentor but also his elder in the Oromo social system called *gada*, which classes men and their duties in eight-year age groups (not women: Oromos are joined with other Ethiopians by their monumental sexism). These factors muted the argument they were having at lunch, but something important was clearly at stake for both men. The argument was about blood and class.

"Who is OLF?" Desta said in reply to a question of mine. "You can say there is no OLF inside the country. As an organization they don't exist—they're a clique. All their leaders are outside the country. Something breaks out here or there and OLF claims credit. But as a movement—yes, something is happening. It's a clique and it's also a ghost. And we have come to identify with this ghost."

This statement became a kind of talisman for me in the days to come; but it didn't satisfy the Marxist Kumsa. Gently, enigmatically smiling, he wondered whether a nationalist ghost mattered to anyone other than a few "petty bourgeois intellectuals."

"My brothers are in jail in Mendi," Desta told us. "They didn't do anything, they're not OLF, but they were put in jail after I came back into the country. It's like a warning. People have nowhere to hide, they're being forced to choose between OPDO and OLF. The government has invented its own shadow—the OPDO will repeat the slogans they give them. A ghost is there because somebody has died, there is a reason for it to be there. But you create a shadow, you use it. A ghost is real—much more real than a shadow. It possesses people, it changes them."

Desta's slow deadpan voice was raspy from a cold. As he slouched in his chair his sardonic manner became edged with anger. "I know identity is a bullshit. I see through the bullshit, and I hate it. But the more somebody tries to stop you thinking about it the more fanatic you become. I hate the Abyssinian system because it's breeding fanatic Oromos. I hate the consequences, I fear the consequences, but every time you try to speak some words they outsmart you. Identity, after all, it's prescribed, it's given as a birthmark, you have no choice. As rational human beings you go beyond—but because of the smartness they hold me there, they don't let me go beyond. I don't mind being outsmarted given there are some underlying principles as a point of reference. But with these guys everything is manipulable. They tell you, oh, he is a narrow nationalist—they use these catchphrases. Oromo is a predicament. You have to stick to Oromo identity to disagree with the portrait of the Oromo as presented by Abyssinians. That very effort will force you to identify as Oromo. I wasted so much time on this bullshit. Who am I? I am an Oromo, an Ethiopian, a social anthropologist. I am also an individual, more than any of these. I am Desta. But in school when I asked where my people came from, I was told to shut up. 'From a cow dung.' Oromoness is inescapable for me. I can't go beyond. There are many reasons to be a nationalist. For me it's despair."

Getachew disappeared from the room. He returned with the map. He wanted his protégé to show, objectively, what he meant by Oromo. Who was included? Where did they live? And what did these questions of identity matter to the peasants growing the Ethiopian grain called teff there? Desta stood and brought me to the map. He traced, not the government's new Region 4, not the OLF's imaginary independent state, not the population distribution of Ethiopia, but the way Oromo tradition itself conceives the map.

"It's based on geography. They divide it east and west by the Great Rift Valley." On one side of the highlands live three Oromo groups, on the other side two: five, the magic number in Oromo cosmology. This was the answer to Getachew's question, and with it the lunch ended.

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In the following days I got to know something about Desta Abdissa's life. His grandfather, a traditional Oromo priest in Mendi, had selected him to inherit the ritual and political scepter; but his father, a rich peasant, packed him off to a Seventh Day Adventist mission school in order to be educated in the modern world. There he was taught that everything he'd learned from his grandfather was the devil's work. The language of instruction was Amharic. Oromo language, names, the *gada* system, the culture itself had a despised status in public life. *Galla na gari piazza ay gabam*: "Galla and horse-drawn carts are not allowed in the city center," went the saying, Galla being the equivalent of "nigger" for Oromo. Oromo nationalists like to draw an analogy between their situation and that of American blacks—an Oromo professor in Tennessee is even writing a book on the subject. I've also heard the OLF compared by a detractor to the Black Panthers. The analogy disintegrates along all kinds of fault lines, but it is convenient shorthand when you're trying to explain to an American why people are angry.

And yet in the next phase of Desta's life identity ceased to matter. He joined the student movement, in which there was "common purpose—to fight against injustice, and for common land, equality." Still a teenager, he fled the country into Sudan one step ahead of the imperial police. He spent a year in Khartoum masquerading as a Muslim. "They had a cooling system in the Russian Library, so I used to go there to get away from the heat. They had books of Marx and Engels in English, and I read them. And this guy was explaining my life to me. It was self-contained. It explained everything."

Back in Ethiopia, he landed in jail for eighteen months. Soon after his release he suddenly found himself a young cadre in the agriculture ministry of the revolutionary government that had just overthrown Haile Selassie. In these heady times, barely twenty years old, his brain stuffed with Marxist readings, he was assigned to propagandize the Dergue's land reform in his home region. Twelve thousand peasants there, who had seized eight hundred guns from local landlords, were at his command. "I could have gone *shifta*," Desta wryly told me—led his own rebellion. Instead, he listened to the peasants' complaints about land nationalization and took them back to Addis. But the Dergue wasn't interested in criticism from the peasantry and threw Desta in prison for the first of seven times. Later, he understood that nationalization had simply replaced local Amhara landlords with the all-powerful state. It had also ruined his own father, who lost most of his land. "He started coming to me for money, which humiliated me. I realized what I had done. It was a shallow Marxist idea of mankind and I regret it."

Every time he tried to go home under the Dergue he was arrested. He hasn't seen his father in seventeen years. His mother died during one of his stays in jail. He found that Amhara chauvinism had survived utopia and was dividing the fratricidal student movement. Within three years of the revolution everything had gone to pieces. And it was at this time, during his longest and harshest imprisonment, in Jimma, where he entertained less educated prisoners by embellishing on the plot of a movie called *The Blue Train* every night for three weeks, that he began to think of his grandfather again and what had been left behind.

"I always kept reading, thinking I just needed to know more, to be more objective, more mature, and then this feeling would go away. I knew Getachew disapproved of it—he looked down from the higher moral ground of class analysis. But the feeling didn't go away. The Christian was a worldview, and Marx was a worldview—I thought, maybe Oromo is a worldview too. Maybe I can use this."

Desta spent the next seventeen years trying to understand "this feeling." From his Kenyan exile he began slipping back across the border on foot to do his field work in Oromo villages, staying for six months at a time. After five years his wife, the mother of his two sons, sent him a letter from Addis asking for a divorce. Two years ago, in London, he finally completed his dissertation on Oromo identity and thought. Into it, he told me, he poured all of his rage at Ethiopia, the revolution, the Abyssinians, the Oromo, himself. And then, at forty, it was time to go home. In spite of "these letters in front of my name," the university hasn't provided him the house it

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gave other returning professors ("Trying to frustrate me into leaving again"), so he sleeps on the floor at the home of an old comrade from the halcyon days of land reform.

"All my life I have been a coward. All my life I've been afraid of fighting, I always hated the idea of a fight. But I don't give a fuck any more. I'm getting tired, I feel I've run too long and far. I think I have done my bit."

There's one more irony to the story. Desta's thesis has begun to win a reputation at Addis Ababa University, one of the last strongholds of the Amhara elite, and also among OPDO officials of the Oromo regional government. Suddenly, he suggested at the end of my trip, he has something to lose in Ethiopia.

Scars

Desta Abdissa's brand of nationalism isn't what you find among most Oromo. It is more interesting—shot through with the passionate contradictions of his guilt at having made it in the Abyssinian world, his anger at continuing to find himself thwarted, his candor, his intimacy with Oromo tradition, his disgust with the obsession over identity, his inability to transcend it, his capacity for harshness and for tenderness. On the campus of Addis Ababa University, which overlooks the city center from the north, nationalism comes in simpler form. Oromo teachers and students now hold separate post-graduation parties, frown on mixed marriages, and tend to have only other Oromo as friends. "They *must* tend," an Oromo research assistant said.

When the analogy with black Americans inevitably came up, I pointed out the advantage of Ethiopians' physical similarity to one another: at least for a few seconds strangers had a chance to know the individual before group assumptions could get in the way. There was a pause. "You can tell the Tigrayans," the research assistant's friend said—as if this were the real advantage. Shortly afterward the research assistant abruptly led me out of the coffee shop where we'd been talking. Two informers, he said, had just sat down at the next table.

I asked how he knew they were informers.

"They had the scars here." He pointed next to his eye, where some Tigrayan men bear two vertical incisions. They were informers because they were Tigrayans. I remarked on the occupational handicap of having INFORMER tattooed across their foreheads, but the research assistant was in a serious mood and missed my irony.

Discussions with Oromo nationalists seemed to end as soon as they began. Oromo wanted self-determination, just like anyone else. When I asked about other ethnic groups within the region, about the problem of common resources like rivers, about widespread intermarriage between Oromo and Amhara, about where exactly Oromia was, the level of indignation rose. Did I mean the Oromo have no right to self-determination? That phrase, trailed by the suffix "up to and including secession," is the beginning and end of OLF political thought. The organization ("a clique and a ghost") came out of an earlier movement of Oromo army officers called Macha-Tulama, which was crushed by Haile Selassie in the late sixties. Since its founding in 1974 the OLF's prestige, to paraphrase the gibe about E.M. Forster's reputation, has grown with every year that it failed to take power. While the TPLF in the rugged northern mountains turned itself into a disciplined fighting force capable of overrunning the Ethiopian Army, the OLF, with twenty-five million Oromo spread across an area almost as large as Texas, remained a loose collection of guerrillas and sympathizers who controlled little territory and had no coherent program.

In 1991, after the fall of the Dergue, the OLF entered into a governing coalition with the victorious TPLF. It lasted less than a year and fell apart amid mutual recriminations: the TPLF claimed that the OLF was divided and unprepared to govern, its popularity overstated; the OLF pointed out that its leaders were being arrested and its fighters attacked. Even some government critics believe that the OLF's decision to go into armed opposition was a precipitous and tragic mistake. Since 1992 there has been, depending on whom you ask, either sporadic skirmishing or guerrilla war all over Oromia. Everyone agrees that the vast majority of educated Oromos support the OLF and are deeply alienated from the government. The extent of peasant sympathy is always hard to gauge; what's clear enough is that people in the countryside are caught in a spiral of worsening violence, that

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there is torture and extrajudicial killing by government soldiers, and that the OLF fails to protect the Oromo peasants it relies on. Desta Abdissa was fond of quoting an Oromo proverb: "When two elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers."

Some Ethiopians claim that the OLF's organizational weakness reflects the relative ease of existence in the fertile south, or the Amharicization of many Oromo, or the *gadà* social structure, which is less hierarchical and more open than Abyssinian culture. For the purposes of political struggle, it means that when a foreign journalist tries to make contact with OLF leaders inside Ethiopia and to visit OLF units in the countryside, there is no one to talk to—no door opens. An Oromo elder close to the OLF warned me that I might be kidnapped if I tried, because of American support for the Ethiopian government. Yet OLF representatives in Europe and the United States complain that their struggle is unknown or misrepresented in the West.

"What is their program?" Andreas Eshete, the philosopher and government advisor, demanded rhetorically. "The opposition simply has nothing to say on economic or social questions. They are still imprisoned by debate over the division of political power." Even in a de facto single-party system, he said, competition would come from the natural tension between the center and the regions. When I asked about Amnesty International's recent report cataloguing human rights abuses by the government, including illegal detention, torture, and killing of OLF suspects, Eshete dismissed it as a biased work based on flimsy allegations. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said as much when he met Amnesty representatives last year in Geneva. As for the suppression of the Oromo newspaper *Urji* in some towns outside of Addis Ababa (which even the U.S. embassy confirmed), Eshete laughed it off as a problem of economics and literacy. "Try to sell a paper in Oromia—it's a hard thing to do."

Stars

The fact that *Urji* reprints OLF "military communiqués" as if they were reliable news reports makes it easier for government supporters to dismiss it. The fact that the government has brought a nonstop succession of criminal charges amounting to harassment against *Urji* and other opposition papers actually enhances their credibility. In Oromo *urji* means "stars," as in "the future." One morning I visited the newspaper's office: it turned out to be a tin-roofed mud and straw house, in a hillside slum near the university, whose rooms were dark because power in the neighborhood was off. *Urji*'s staff struck me as an earnest, dedicated group. "I take *Urji* as if it were my first child and I want its survival," said Tesfaye Deressa, the young editor in chief. "By any means I say I want it to appear today." Everyone in the office had been in prison, under the Dergue or the present government. One older man had served eight years in a cell so crowded that the prisoners had to sleep side by side, head to foot. He called it "sour intercourse." Imprisonment seemed very nearly a universal experience among Ethiopians between twenty-five and fifty, and their months or years of detention came up in the casual way that Americans mention where they went to college. Prison was the one thing that united Ethiopians in all three political camps.

There might be more to come for four of *Urji*'s staff—including Tesfaye—who had a court appointment in two days and were facing years in prison on charges of false information. They assured me that they cross-check all the stories their "reporters"—merchants, hospital workers, government officials—send in from the field. *Urji* readers are asked to believe that most of Oromia is a war zone in which every jailing and murder is politically motivated. It's a commonplace that solid information outside of Addis Ababa is extremely difficult to get. This void allows all sides to offer for foreign consumption essentially whatever picture of the country they choose. But some things are true even though *Urji* says they're true. I found this out when I left the capital to see for myself.

"What Are You?"

The town of Ambo lies on a plateau two and a half hours west of Addis Ababa, dry in March but spotted green with eucalyptus. My compan-

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ion on the trip was a thirty-eight-year-old former Ethiopian Army officer named Solomon Abera. Solomon's slender frame and melancholy features and decent, straightforward manner didn't fit my notion of the Dergue military. The first time I met him he told me, "I have enjoyed a horrible life." Solomon now lives south of Addis in Nazret, but he was born in a village on the ridge above Ambo, the son of an Amhara farmer and an Oromo woman: his first language was Oromo, his second Amharic. When he was a shepherd boy of nine or ten, his maternal grandparents teasingly asked the question that now lies at the heart of Ethiopian politics: "What are you?" "Both," he answered. But when he was growing up, he said, ethnicity didn't matter. What mattered was class. "An Oromo and Amhara peasant were the same, and landlords were the same." You knew the landlords by their horse-drawn carts. In school he heard about socialism and the idea made immediate sense to him, he said, echoing Desta Abdissa, "because my parents were peasants. I was seeing it in my life. There should be no one exploiting and oppressing and no one oppressed." Over twenty years and thousands of corpses later, the words still had the simple incantatory power of belief when Solomon Abera spoke them.

He had ambitions to be a scientist and even completed a year at the university, but his family's poverty forced him into a military career. He rose to the rank of major in the Dergue's army, commanding armored infantry on the front lines of two losing wars—in Eritrea, where a bullet shattered his thigh, and then in Tigray. At first he had believed in the Dergue's revolutionary promise and welcomed the nationalization of land, until, like Desta Abdissa, he saw that his own father gained nothing. His youthful dream died hard. He began to tell himself that he was fighting for Ethiopian unity. By the end of the war he was fighting simply because he was a professional soldier.

On the road to Ambo we began passing the rusted, weedy hulks of Ethiopian Army tanks destroyed or abandoned in the field during fighting in 1991. "Soviet-made T-55," Solomon murmured. He had been trained to operate these tanks. I got out to photograph one; Solomon, who kept none of his war medals or memorabilia, stayed in the car. "Bad memories," he told me as we drove on. In the last months of the war he was commanding teenage forced recruits who wore civilian clothes under their uniforms, surrendered in droves at the first opportunity, climbed out of their tanks "with the engines running." In early 1991 the Ethiopian Army, the largest in Africa, swiftly collapsed. Colonel Mengistu, who had vowed to fight to the last man and the last bullet, fled to Zimbabwe. Solomon, stationed northeast of Addis in Debre Birhan, got a call one night from a friend in the Ministry of Defense. The friend's sister had arranged passage for them both across the Kenyan border.

"I stayed up all night in my office, I didn't sleep. I was struggling against myself. One minute I think, yes, I will go out and try to help my family leave. Another minute I think, no, I cannot leave my children behind. Struggling against myself, this way, that way. Finally I decided: I will not save myself and leave my children behind to starve or have some other problem. I will die here. In the morning I called my friend: 'Go, good luck, I cannot leave.' I didn't wait, I hung up. He went to Canada. He is now training to be a medical doctor. He will be an impressive man. When he called from Canada after the *Woyane* took over he had only one question: 'Is Solomon alive?'"

By then Solomon was imprisoned in a TPLF detention center for Ethiopian officers, where he spent five months being told what he already knew: that he had fought for a "fascist" regime. But he was treated well and eventually released to return home to Nazret and his wife and children.

"I went into the army because my father was a peasant and he couldn't afford to educate me. I spent fifteen years there. I lost not only my time but my health. And in the end I had nothing."

He now lives on his hard-won disability pension of $32 a month, and on a small livestock-fattening business that he runs out of his yard with the support of an American friend. He was getting on with his life—a life outside politics. He felt no bitterness, but his only concern now was his family. He, his wife, and his four children share everything: this, he said, is his own private socialism.

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"If You Don't Open Your Mouth . . ."

The place where we were traveling had long been a "hot area." Around Ambo the Ethiopian Army and local militias had put up the fiercest resistance to the Tigrayan rebels at the end of the war; reprisals had been harsh; and OLF support was now as strong here as anywhere in Oromia.

In the town before Ambo we picked up three hitchhiking schoolteachers, two Oromo and one Amhara. Now that the region was autonomous, at least on paper, the language of elementary education was no longer Amharic but Oromo (in secondary school students are taught in English, which no one can speak). This created some problems for the older children who had already been schooled in Amharic, and for the children, Amhara and mixed, whose first language was Amharic (including Solomon's own); but for most of the younger children, the teachers said, learning in Oromo was "beautiful." The language was only recently transliterated, and the choice of the Roman alphabet by Oromo nationalists infuriated some Amhara. Why turn to Europe for a script when Amharic itself had an ancient and perfectly wonderful one? But *Urji*'s staff (whose Oromo nationalist paper has to publish in Amharic because it's the lingua franca of the major towns) insisted that certain Oromo long vowel sounds had no equivalent in the Amharic script. So written Oromo made its contribution to inflaming ethnic feelings.

As we passed through a village, one of the teachers remarked that a few days ago a government militiaman here had been killed outside his house. I asked if there was OLF activity in the area.

There was a moment's pause.

"Some," he said.

"No," the Amhara woman said.

"I don't know," the Oromo woman said.

The car exploded in laughter. Solomon remembered an Amharic proverb. "'If you don't open your mouth, a fly won't enter it.'"

Ambo had a provincial town's quiet watchfulness, and I felt noticed as we strolled among others along the main road at dusk. In a restaurant, the waiter and barman told us that ethnic politics had hit Ambo hard. Two Oromo-Eritrean couples they knew personally had split up. Amhara, Tigrayan, and Oromo youth gangs had formed in the aftermath of the apparent murder by government soldiers of an Oromo hotel owner named Derara in September 1994. The waiter, an Oromo ex-soldier whose wife was Amhara, said, "Three kinds of teff are sold in the market: white, red, and *sergegna*—mixed. You cannot separate mixed teff." Solomon and the waiter and barman—all three Oromo—spoke Amharic together. It was the language of the town, as Oromo was the language of the countryside. Ambo seemed as thoroughly mixed as *sergegna*; yet people here were trying to separate it.

Within a few hours we had picked up several stories of illegal arrest and torture of OLF suspects by TPLF soldiers based in town. Solomon's own uncle had been arrested twice, but not tortured, and had lost a lucrative job looking for contraband coffee at checkpoints. He knew at least thirty people in jail. Two men had recently been released with fresh wounds from a "secret" detention center everyone seemed to know about, an old North Korean ammunition factory fifteen miles to the west. One of them had fled town; the other, I was told, was too frightened to talk to me, his house was being watched.

That night Solomon and I were drinking beer in a bar that was getting rowdier as closing time approached. Just before eleven, four men walked in. Even before noticing that one of them was wearing green fatigues, I knew instinctively that they were Tigrayan government soldiers. They looked compact and serious and wary, and instead of sitting down in the bar, which had gone quiet, they walked straight through to the back, where, presumably, the girls were. When we were outside, Solomon said, "The same thing that caused the failure of the Dergue is now starting with the *Woyane*: going to bars, boxing with local people for girls, getting drunk, undisciplined." It was inevitable, he said, if you occupied someone else's place, if you no longer had a cause to fight for other than simply staying in power.

The next day was market day in Ambo, and we spent the morning sipping barley beer with farmers and hearing their complaints about rumored tax increases and the high price of desub-

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sidized fertilizer. Around noon another of Solomon's uncles appeared and told us what everyone else in town apparently already knew: two Ambo men, OLF cadres who had fled town several years ago and had been arrested recently in Addis and taken back here, were shot to death last night in the bush outside of town. The bodies were still lying there—the families were afraid to collect them. There had been a lot of gunfire, and Solomon's uncle seemed surprised that we hadn't heard it.

Over the course of the day the number of victims increased to three, then four, then back down to two, before finally settling at three. One of the dead, named Tilahun Gebretsedik, was an ex-soldier with a wife and four children; the second, Asefa Demese, had worked at the hospital in Ambo and had a wife and three kids. The third was apparently a separate case, a young farmer named Alemu Sory from a village on the ridge—a distant relative of Solomon's. Solomon's father had come down from the hills on horseback to meet us in town, heard about the killings on the way, and recognized Alemu Sory's name. In the evening Solomon and I met up again with the waiter. He knew both Ambo men and their families. A friend of his, a policeman, had seen them being led out of Ambo jail by soldiers yesterday evening. Their bodies were now back with the families and the waiter had gone to pay condolences. He said that the victims' chests had been riddled with bullets. The spray of gunfire may have been designed to simulate a firefight, and around the finger of one corpse someone had placed a grenade pin. But the exit wounds were in front.

These details troubled me: if the soldiers wanted to cover up the nature of the deaths, why were the men brought back here from Addis? Everything else suggested that the murders were intended as a warning to people in Ambo. And how could I be sure they had been killed for being OLF, as everyone claimed, and not, say, to settle some personal score from the end of the war? I wanted to speak to the families and to see the bodies myself, but the waiter told me it "wasn't necessary," which meant impossible. By now everyone was much too frightened. So, lacking any first-hand evidence, Solomon and I spent a second night in a town where political killings had apparently just taken place.

"God Killed Them"

On Sunday it became clear that pro-OLF elements in Ambo had not arranged a masquerade for my benefit. On Sunday the two men from Ambo were buried. It was one of the stranger funerals I've ever seen. In the early afternoon a crowd suddenly materialized on the main road—a very large crowd, hundreds of people, walking slowly, many of the women in white, the men wearing threadbare jackets that were obviously their best clothes. The hearse was a black minibus; two coffins lay inside. One man in rags, either too poor or too crazy to be afraid, was trailing the hearse and sobbing: "Asefa, my brother, I haven't seen you for so long." No one else made a sound. I knew that this was unusual, because yesterday there had been another funeral in Ambo: a hotel owner, who had been imprisoned as an OLF suspect following the funeral of his fellow hotel owner Derara, had contracted tuberculosis in jail and died after being released. At his funeral women wailed inconsolably, men in ceremonial robes on decorated horses waved sticks and shouted praises. Today's quiet was spooky. It felt like a silent protest march.

Solomon and I fell in with the procession. Feigning ignorance, I asked an educated-looking man who had died.

"I don't know," he said quickly and moved off.

Solomon interpreted for me with an old farmer. How had the men died? "God killed them." Were they old or young? "I don't know."

By my right ear I heard someone mutter in English, "Young." He was walking alongside me and staring straight ahead. I asked how they had died. "Maybe someone killed them." Why? "There's a problem to speak. Maybe something with politics." Then he excused himself and hurried ahead.

We stopped walking. We had heard enough. But as we turned back toward town a man in a baseball cap caught up with us. He had heard our questions, he wanted us to know whose funeral this was, and he told us the story we al-

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ready knew.

By the time we drove out of town, Solomon and I fully expected to have our way blocked by security vehicles. Ambo appeared to be a town under enemy occupation. And yet the whole weekend we had seen no soldiers other than the four at the bar, we had never been stopped on the road, we had been questioned by no officials, and now we were free to leave. But the people in Ambo felt anything but free. It was disturbing and disorienting. Solomon was still reeling from the funeral. "They're in the procession and they don't know who died? Can you imagine the fear, George? If it was my brother I would have to cry out!"

We had arranged to give a surreptitious lift to an Ambo man who had a court appointment in Addis Ababa tomorrow, and on the way he told us the details of his case. He had been arrested at yet another funeral—that of the hotel owner Derara in 1994—on charges of illegal demonstration and incitement. Sixty others, he said, had been arrested with him (Amnesty International published a similar figure). They had been detained in several jails, including the ammunition factory, where, he said, he was kept in solitary confinement and tortured by Tigrayan soldiers in the manner in which Desta Abdissa was tortured two decades ago, the manner customary in Ethiopia, both under the Dergue and today: his cuffed hands forced over his knees, he said, he was hung upside down from a rod and his legs and buttocks flogged. Over a year later there was a thin scar on his wrist. Finally a court in Addis freed them on bail. Now he was back in Ambo trying to eke out a living by offering to write petitions for illiterate people outside the courthouse.

As we passed the eucalyptus groves near Addis Ababa it started to rain. Solomon and our passenger were having an argument. The owner of the hotel where we had stayed in Ambo was in jail for shooting another man. (Of Ambo's hotel owners, one, Derara, had been killed, apparently by soldiers; a second had died of TB he caught in prison after Derara's funeral; and a third was in jail on a murder charge. Solomon was fond of a proverb from his military days: "Better a living soldier than a dead general." But he agreed that the worst fate of all was to be a hotel owner in Ambo.) Our passenger claimed that the shooting, the culmination of a feud dating back to the Dergue years, had ethnic causes. Solomon rejected this. He knew how these things happened under the Dergue: both men had been corrupt party members—the fight was over a bribe for a fuel license. Anyway, both men were Oromo. The murder was personal, not ethnic. This seemed a very important point for Solomon. In a sense he was defending the honor of the government in which he had served for so many years. He turned to me to explain.

"The Dergue was a military dictatorship. When I was in detention after the war, the TPLF told us that the Dergue was Amhara, anti-Oromo. I stood up—there were two hundred people—and I said: No. It oppressed everyone. Amhara, Oromo, Tigrayan. The whole country suffered. It is hard enough to convince people of class analysis. You need to explain Marxism, you need to explain feudalism. But it is very simple to use ethnic or religious. It touches a wound. It is your blood. If someone says 'Dirty Oromo' I feel it here." He pointed to his gut. "You know, George, I really believe in socialism. The poor must have protection. Not the socialism of the Dergue—not by force. But a more democratic." He asked me if I knew anywhere such a socialism existed. China? I said no. Cuba? No. He sat back and fell silent. Later he said, "Still only a dream."

Kill Me Quick

In Addis Ababa my Ambo story was received with varying degrees of belief. At the U.S. embassy, where, I learned, cables written at lower levels that criticize Ethiopian government repression are sometimes softened higher up before being sent on to Washington, it was taken as a lucky journalistic find—truth, but an exceptional truth. A senior judge, who had told me he doubted there was illegal detention in Ethiopia, listened silently, seemed to accept what I was telling him, then said "What to do?" and changed the subject. A government supporter interpreted the incident as an administrative problem: the center needed to let the new regions make their

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own mistakes on the way to genuine autonomy. *Urji* ran an article on its front page that omitted the third victim and was off by two days on the date but otherwise reported the story as I had heard it from many people in Ambo. A small incident, already on the way to dissolving in the confused perceptions and counter-charges of Ethiopia's ethnic politics.

Ambo told me that there is a good deal of official abuse in the Oromo region (I lost track of the number of people said to be in jail), whether directed from the center or local and more arbitrary. There is also enough freedom for someone like me to learn what I did in a single weekend. The deaths of three men will drive more young Oromo into the OLF, and the next generation of OLF leaders inside Ethiopia will be more ethnically fanatic than the older one in exile. As a result of the killings the Tigrayan soldiers in town, who stand for central power, will become more isolated, more hated, and probably more aggressive. It has always been the belief in Ethiopian politics that security lies in monopolizing power and eliminating one's enemies: it was the belief under the emperor and under the Dergue, and it is still the belief today.

Solomon Abera was far from the only Ethiopian I met who has no more heart for politics. A kind of exhaustion has set in. Desta Abdissa's ex-wife, once a student revolutionary, is trying to set up a cooperative among twenty Oromo women. "I don't want to talk about politics any more," she said wearily. "I just want to do humanitarian work." One of Desta's best friends has withdrawn into mysticism, telling me, "I'm trying to convince Oromos that the peaceful way through Christianity will lead to power if God wills." I met a family of six former fighters and activists, all in their thirties and forties, none of whom ever married or had children; they have all lost their youth to "the struggle" and now seem at sea. Some people are concentrating on making money in the newly privatizing economy. The dream of equality that still haunts Solomon and that nearly destroyed his generation is mocked by the thousands of mutilated beggars in Addis Ababa and the endless hardships of the vast peasantry. In the failure of that dream, younger Ethiopians have turned back to the old consciousness of blood.

The day before I left the country, Desta Abdissa's brothers were released from prison in Mendi. His old mentor Getachew had intervened with the Oromo regional government to secure their freedom. In the wake of this news, Desta's mood came closer to the meaning of his name than I had seen it before. On my last day we drove out of Addis Ababa an hour northeast to a small town called Sendafa, where former officials of the Dergue had been detained at the Ethiopian Police College. The man who had overseen Desta's torture almost twenty years ago was now in prison himself. Desta had visited him once and brought a bunch of bananas. I wanted to see one face of the Dergue, and to see Desta's response. I also wanted to see the inside of a prison, which by now seemed to be Ethiopia's most important institution.

We were turned away at the gate. The prisoners had been moved to Addis. Instead, we crossed the road and plunged into the market. I struggled to keep up with Desta across the mud and slippery stones, amid the thronging Oromo traders and children and their mules. Some demon energy had come over him. When he stopped and turned, he was beaming. We ducked into a dim little room where a young girl served us the local liquor called Kill Me Quick. The mud walls were decorated with old magazine articles in English that celebrated socialist solidarity between the people of Ethiopia and the people of the German Democratic Republic. The room quickly filled with staring children. Desta began asking them about the Oromo word *ayyaana*—the nature of reality. It was the question he had been asking Oromo peasants as an anthropologist for seventeen years, and today it turned into a Socratic lesson. Desta was in his element, he was completely happy.

When we returned to the road a teenage boy waylaid us. He said that he had watched our car and now we owed him money. Desta dismissed him curtly. His mood was already darkening; the return to Addis Ababa lay before us. "Did you hear?" Desta said to me. "He was speaking Amharic. He wanted to trick us, because he's been civilized. That's what civilization means: knowing to trick." □

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Craig Calhoun and Pamela DeLargy

RIGHTS AFTER LIBERATION

A Report from Eritrea

Eritrea recently emerged from a devastating thirty-one-year war for national independence. One right, self-determination, held center stage. In the everyday, Wilsonian sense, this was achieved in 1991 by military success, and ratified by domestic referendum and international recognition. Yet, self-determination is still an issue. What is the "self" that will determine Eritrea's peacetime future? How is the nation to be represented? How are its decisions to be made? How are the diverse range of Eritrean identities to be incorporated in this putatively singular self?

The struggle decimated two generations of Eritrea's young adults. It brought enormous destruction of physical resources, from the uprooting of the country's main intercity railroad tracks to the uprooting of ancient olive orchards by a vengeful Ethiopian occupier in retreat. The major port city of Massawa was left in ruins; between war and drought, the country's livestock, forests, and farmland suffered almost equally.

Through most of this struggle, the U.S. government either sided with the Ethiopian colonizers or ignored Eritrea—despite Ethiopia's clear violation of the terms of its UN-sponsored federation with Eritrea. Only during the war's last phases was humanitarian assistance provided to civilians. Understandably, American moralism about rights is suspect to Eritreans.

To speak of rights in Eritrea is also to invite questions about priorities. Pressing tasks of reconstruction and economic development, national integration, and defense against aggressive neighbors seem to dwarf other concerns. In such circumstances, isn't it unreasonable, presumptuous, or at least impolite to raise questions about rights? It is a delicate matter, to be sure, but surely the riposte has to be, "If not now, when?"

This is not simply an outsider's question. Eritrea is in the concluding stage of an exemplary process of constitution-making. The Constitutional Commission has held extensive discussions throughout the country with widely diverse groups of people. Village elders have been asked to describe traditional approaches to land rights and invited to ask questions and offer opinions about proposed constitutional provisions. A wide variety of educational programs—even comic books—have been designed to help people understand what a constitution is and how one makes use of it, to create a strong sense of ownership of the country and of participation in making its future. The discussions have dealt recurrently with the question of what rights the Constitution will enshrine. A national assembly will soon be elected to consider its final draft. In the meantime, it is worth asking not just what rights the Constitution will declare, but how current government practices will pave (or block) the way to implementing those rights.

Independent Eritrea is blessed with a government that is extremely honest and fairly efficient—no small blessings within its regional frame of reference. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) is a reconstructed, peacetime version of the old Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). It carries forward not only with government but also with a wide range of economic activities during the current transitional period. The PFDJ is trying to hold together a country split almost equally between Christians and Muslims, with the religious divide reinforced

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by the economic, ecological, and cultural divisions between highland and lowland peoples. It is playing a difficult role as regional peacekeeper, while also defending itself against Jihadist incursions from the Sudan. It is developing capacities for self-reliance—rather than accepting the offers of the World Bank and dozens of other multilateral and bilateral donors to decide its future according to their own priorities.

The government and the party see nation-building and economic recovery as the national priorities at this time. The experience of the EPLF in mobilizing Eritreans across ethnic, religious, class, and gender lines to create a national political and military force influences all policies. Leaders—and many others—believe that the state must succeed the front as the main agent of national unity and stability, not least in order to provide for economic development. Nationalism, secularism, and equity are the guiding principles. The biggest questions about rights focus on threats to national unity, reactions from traditional ethnic groups, and tensions between those who fought for Eritrea's independence and the rest of the population. Though the Constitution may say something different, for now the government sees itself, and not independent citizen action, as the advocate and guarantor of rights.

Economic and social rights are most concretely pursued, from solid labor laws to provision of health care. More abstract civil and political rights bring debate. Consider Eritrea's compulsory national service program, designed largely to foster national integration. No provision was made for conscientious objection. Refusal to participate brought rapid sanctions against Jehovah's Witnesses. This sparked one of Eritrea's biggest rights controversies to date, but the controversy was nearly all external. Few Eritreans objected when the government denied civil rights to all Jehovah's Witnesses (not only youths who refused to serve). People who had held government jobs through three regimes were released. Witnesses who had licenses to trade in the public markets found them revoked. Many left the country. Despite national criticism, the government appears to see little problem either with acting against the group as a whole or with the measures it has chosen. Jehovah's Witnesses refused to participate in the referendum or the liberation struggle, and to refuse national service was the final step, as many Eritreans see it, in declaring themselves not to be part of the country. One has to admit that it seems odd to refuse to vote on religious grounds but to hold government jobs. (The government's action may also have been aimed to forestall resistance from traditional communities—especially but not only Muslim—reluctant to allow young women to join in national service.)

Leadership Questions

Rights are subjects of lively debate. Questions of religion, property, gender, and language loom largest. The government seeks to guarantee both freedom of faith and respect among faiths. It is adamantly secular, however, demanding that religion be kept to its "proper" sphere—for example penalizing not only religious organizations that interfere in politics, but also those that wish to meddle too much in economic development. What counts as intervention is not clear, however, and may mean different things to Christians—Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic—and Muslims.

Land tenure is the biggest of property questions. The government would like greater unity of national law than traditional systems of land rights allow, yet it is also committed to return land seized by Ethiopia to its "rightful owners." Its temporary resolution has been to claim all land for the state, to leave local (mainly traditional) tenants with usufruct, and to create a new system of land law that will be reasonably just to different groups with different traditions and ecologies. In cities, too, there are questions about who succeeds to property nationalized by Ethiopian rulers—the previous owners, or the state? Similarly, what rights do Eritreans who became rich while avoiding participation in the liberation struggle have if they return? Can the front retain its commitment to social justice while building a capitalist market system? What happens to the vast majority who have little capital to invest?

In the field, the EPLF was a remarkably gender-integrated fighting force, and a determined

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advocate of women's rights. In peacetime, this agenda has lost some momentum. Ironically, some of the rural villages liberated by the EPLF are more progressive than many old families in the capital, which stayed under Ethiopian occupation. Parents have demanded that their sons renounce wartime brides, for example. Pressing for women's rights also offends some conservative religious believers—at a time when the government is anxious about Christian/Muslim splits.

It is easy to assume that a "right" is a trump card in all arguments, and easier still the less one knows about a complex situation. A case in point is the matter of female genital mutilation. Eritrea is a signatory to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which clearly condemns such practices. Many members of Eritrea's government are not just revolted by the practice, but campaigned against it during their years as freedom fighters. But the practice remains widespread in traditional society, and mechanisms for defending the rights of girls remain weak. Still, it can only appear absurd when international (mainly U.S.) activists propose tying U.S. food and development aid to Eritrea to the government's taking stronger steps to eliminate the practice. Absurd, because on most plausible scales, illiteracy and malnutrition are bigger threats to Eritrean girls than genital mutilation. Absurd, because through nearly a decade of working with the rural population on just this issue, EPLF women's activists determined that an aggressive, human-rights-oriented campaign was not the most effective strategy. Focusing on the health risks and on female literacy proved much more useful. The current government's position is that the most important factor in eradicating mutilation is the improvement of women's health, education, and economic status. Providing social services and backing equal property, wage, and land rights may do more than any direct campaign to secure the right to be free from this and other forms of sexual violence. Female genital mutilation is deplorable. It is important to support the Eritrean women—and men—who seek to end it. And it is worthwhile to remind the Eritrean government that failing to attend to such matters is an international embarrassment. But to make this right an absolute is to invite being dismissed out of hand—even by women's activists, who have a range of issues to worry about, not only a single "right."

Another area in which the wartime EPLF was exemplary, but which the peacetime government has found tricky, is reaching out to previously marginalized ethnic groups. Eritrea has nine major ethnic groups, most with their own languages, though highland Tigrinya culture has been dominant. Arabic has spread through much of the predominantly Islamic lowlands, though most often as a second language. Ethiopian rulers tried to split Eritreans against each other by declaring the nationalist movement (falsely) to be mainly Muslim. But one of the most hated aspects of Ethiopian rule was the imposition of Amharic and the ban on Eritrean languages in the schools. During the struggle, the EPLF started radio broadcasts in all the national languages and worked to develop primary educational materials. After independence, the government sought to enshrine this long-standing recognition of ethnic diversity in a "right" for children to be educated in their mother tongues. This has proved difficult and contentious.

Rehabilitating the ruined educational infrastructure is an already Herculean task—expanding the system into the hinterlands still more so. But drafting completely new curricula and providing for primary education in all local languages poses another order of difficulty and raises questions about how well this "right" stands alone. Some groups have very few people educated enough to qualify as teachers. Some are minimally literate and lack written literatures. Translating texts is a huge task in itself. Inevitably, the result is to put educational development on a very uneven footing in the different groups. To complement local diversity with national unity, the government decided that each student receiving instruction in a minority language should also become literate in one of the working languages of the state, Tigrinya or Arabic. Tigrinya speakers start right in on this. Speakers of minority languages (disproportionately Muslim) get a late start on their "national" language. In principle, Tigrinya speakers also study Arabic, but a shortage of qualified teachers has kept

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this from becoming a reality. So Arabic lags as an effective national language. Many Muslims are convinced that Tigrinya-speaking Christian leaders are worried that a common language would unify Muslims.

Many lowlanders, especially, would prefer Arabic as a "school language" in place of local "mother tongues." Instead of offering a right to perpetuate local culture, they charge, government policy denies them the right to join in an international Arabic culture. They also suggest there is an intrinsic bias in favor of Tigrinya speakers, who may learn that as both a "mother tongue" and national language, and then get a head start on English and therefore on admission to higher levels of the educational system (which are all taught in English). The policy has generated both protests (for example, among Saho) and outright refusal to comply (for example, among some Afar who have simply chosen to make Arabic the primary language of instruction for their children). Trying to enforce its policy consistently brings the government into conflict with at least some members of the very groups whose collective rights it seeks to protect.

War, Justice, Freedom

The effects of the war are ubiquitous in Eritrea and the experience of the struggle (or of exile during the struggle) also determines, to a very large degree, how citizens look on their rights and responsibilities. The EPLF was an organization to which members pledged complete loyalty, serving where they were assigned, no questions asked. The front was highly disciplined and "fighters" believed strongly in their responsibility to the struggle. When the war ended, and the EPLF assumed governance, its members continued to serve in the same fashion. They performed their assigned jobs in government or state-owned enterprises without salary until 1995, and many lived in barracks, continuing the communal existence of the war years. By now, however, many demobilized fighters chafe at having little control over their own lives and at seeing returnees from abroad—who did not make comparable sacrifices in the struggle—get ahead faster in civilian careers. Some claim a right to better treatment. This raises the question of how to adjudicate equitably among prior experience, previous sacrifice, and formal credentials as criteria for jobs and leadership positions. Nonfighters claim the government violates their rights by preferring less formally qualified former fighters for key jobs. But is a fighter who spent twenty years in the field developing skills through practical activity simply to step aside—whether as a judge, a mayor, or factory manager—in favor of someone who received a degree abroad but made no contribution to the struggle? And should scarce educational opportunities go to former fighters seeking the degrees they never had the chance to get or to youth who feel a right to higher education after doing well in secondary school?

Eritrea is very state-centered, and still far from a democracy. The government is nonetheless committed to the rule of law, due process, and a respectably wide range of rights. What remains to be seen with the transition to constitutional rule is whether it is prepared to see other agents besides itself and the mass organizations affiliated with the PFDJ as rights advocates. So far it has not been willing to provide routine registration procedures for nongovernmental organizations, for example, including an Eritrean human rights monitoring group. Neither has the government promulgated a press law (though it claims to have written one) or shown an inclination to accept an open press. Nearly all significant mass media are state run (the churches have internal newspapers barred from discussing politics) and an editor may be fired for a misguided exposé. But the concern is not altogether unrealistic that providing more press freedom will empower mainly those who wish to promote one or another brand of religious fundamentalism or divide the country on regional lines. Certainly,

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the wildly irresponsible opposition press in next-door Ethiopia has not provided much advertisement for the benefits of free expression.

Most Eritreans are enjoying greater freedom and security than they ever dared to hope for. Many would deeply resent a government that put concern with (relatively abstract) human and civil rights ahead of basic freedom and security. Repression and fear are not abstractions but all too concrete memories. The achievement of independence is recent enough to make many think that protecting national unity at the expense of minority rights is a reasonable idea—especially when "minority rights" is understood to mean "an opportunity for Islamicist propagandists to operate freely." This is a view more common to the disproportionately empowered Tigrinya-speaking highlanders than to others, not surprisingly, but it is not based on fantasy. Dozens of people have been killed in Sudanese-sponsored Jihadist attacks.

Rights to peace and freedom of movement are enormous gains; it is not surprising that some would sacrifice other rights to save these. But a more extensive regime of rights is necessary if this multicultural society is to survive and prosper with a participatory political system. □

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R.W. Johnson

WHITES IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

The whites of South Africa (roughly 5.5 million people out of a total population of 40 million) are only now getting used to being a minority. It is not just that until the last few years they had the political, economic, and military power that normally only majorities have but they actually felt that they were, if not exactly a majority, at least somehow more authentically South African than black or brown people could ever be. This feeling was perceptible in many different ways. Whites (even English-speaking whites) used to say things like "So-and-so's a real South African—he loves rugby, *boerewors*, and speaking *die taal*," a turn of phrase that made it clear that being a real South African involved conformity to a white Afrikaner stereotype.

Even relatively liberal whites sometimes slipped into such thought patterns. I can remember, in the political science department I used to teach in Durban, the departmental secretary, Miss X—a charming, intelligent woman, fiercely opposed to apartheid—having to type up the seminar lists of students after universities were desegregated in the 1980s. In the first "open" year, only 2 percent of the students were African or Indian; in the second year about 6 percent; but in the third year blacks really cottoned on that things had changed and the number shot up to 28 percent and the year after to over 50 percent. The result was that Miss X found herself typing lists that included not only Johnsons, Browns, and Van der Merwes but Tshabalalas, Poovalinghams, and Ntsebezas. After a while a weary sigh escaped Miss X, bent over the keys: "Oh dear, such a lot of *foreign* names this year!"

But while whites were the only full citizens—making up the army, all the police officer corps, all the leading positions in the business and the professions and, of course, the only ones with a full vote—they also knew, at a more fundamental level, not only that they were a numerical minority but that they were, as such, deeply threatened, that it all could not last. This was both inevitable and unthinkable. Once President F.W. de Klerk unbanned the African National Congress (ANC) in 1990 and announced free, universal suffrage elections, many whites believed for the next several years that he was so immensely cunning that he had all sorts of hidden aces up his sleeve, that he had no real intention of letting "them" take over. This impression was so wide and deep that a friend of mine who is a sophisticated liberal politician was so unsure of whether de Klerk had fully understood that the process he had begun could only end in the transfer of power that he was not satisfied until he had sought out de Klerk and questioned him himself.

The appeal of Eugene Terreblanche's far right AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) for long rested on his promise that he would prevent "Communist revolution" (that is, majority rule). The entire basis of Terreblanche's appeal lay in a Canute-like belief that the future could be held at bay. It was widely expected, as the 1994 election drew nearer, that AWB support would rise as the specter of black rule grew closer and more threatening. In fact the opposite happened, and the AWB shrank into insignificance: as the reality dawned that black rule could not be prevented, the poor whites who made up the bulk of AWB support realized that they would have difficulty enough in the new situation looking after themselves and their families' interests

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without bothering with the sort of right-wing adventurism that Terreblanche stood for.

All this now seems a century ago. The 1994 election not only made anything other than black rule unthinkable but also unleashed a euphoria that, superficially at least, continues. The rhetoric of the new South Africa is a homegrown version of what C. Wright Mills termed "the American celebration," an endless self-confirmatory, self-praising soothing of collective insecurities. What we hear, endlessly, is that South Africans are the "rainbow people of god," that we are a "miracle nation," which had a "miracle election" (although, truth to tell, it was not wholly free or fair), that South Africa is the land of historic reconciliation, an example to the whole world, a South Africa symbolized by Nelson Mandela, a man who represents the victory of humanity over bitterness. This rhetoric is oppressive, just as the "American celebration" was, suffocating not only dissident voices but a far greater variety of experience and consciousness than any such "celebration" can ever allow. In the South African case this enforced sense of cheerfulness often covers a deep pessimism, indeed often a real fear. Many whites are, in their daily lives, deeply scared—scared of violence, of crime, of being squeezed out of jobs by affirmative action and, above all, scared of the sheer brute power of African nationalism. But South Africa is, without much doubt, now the most politically correct country in the world and it is highly politically incorrect, amid this atmosphere of officially endorsed euphoria, to admit that one is scared.

In one sense such fears seem odd, for in every obvious way things are now better in South Africa than they have been for a long time. Not only is apartheid gone, but there is an increasingly easy and unbothered mixing of the races; at a purely personal level, in offices, homes, and factories, race relations are better and more relaxed here than in the United States. The urban guerrilla war is over, all manner of institutions and revolutionary counter-institutions (the police, army, the diplomatic corps, and so on) have been united. Moreover, the ANC has moved through 180 degrees on its economic policy. Seven years ago it saw its objective as building a new East Germany in Africa. However, not only has it not nationalized anything, but it now even mutters about possible privatizations. Inflation is down, growth is at over 3 percent (after years of negative growth), and tourists are flowing in. When one contrasts this reality with what even relatively sober white opinion expected a few years ago, there is no doubt that things are a great deal better than most had dared to hope.

Yet skilled whites are still emigrating in considerable numbers and even many of those who are happy about their decision to stay are not just emphatic but downright passionate in their determination that their children must be equipped to seek their living in other countries. It is, indeed, a cliché of white South African life—it has been most marked among the Jewish community for over a decade now—to find parents anchored here, their children in Britain, Australia, or the United States, and an immense expense and effort put into the endless trips and phone calls necessary to keep some sense of family together. There is no doubting the anguished price such folk are willing to pay—and the bulk of them are nonracist political liberals—to ensure that their children do not have to risk living and working in the new South Africa.

If things are so good, how come things are so bad? The key distinction to make is that although Nelson Mandela has successfully created an atmosphere of reconciliation and even (greatly assisted by a series of national sporting triumphs) a modicum of national unity, he has not generated a feeling of confidence in the future. It would be truer to say that he has created a feeling of phony war, the sense that while things are not going too badly now, at a deeper level a number of processes are at work that are bound to end in tears.

The first of these processes is affirmative action. The new government is, in many obvious ways, naive and incompetent. Having, for example, promised to build one million cheap houses in its first five years for the vast number of homeless or shack-dwelling Africans, the government has actually slowed down the rate of house-building (54,000 in de Klerk's last year, to 20,000 in the past two years). Many other ministries are missing their targets by wide margins, and the government's overall Reconstruction and

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Development Plan (RDP) is in a shambles of over-promise and under-delivery. Yet the one target the government is certainly meeting is that for affirmative action appointments, as large numbers of gravely under-trained and under-educated blacks swarm aboard the gravy train while older, better educated and more experienced whites descend from it.

This process convinces whites that the doors of employment will be shut to their children simply on racial grounds and it also more or less guarantees a steep decline in the (already unimpressive) efficiency of government and the parastatal sector. As yet, the state sector still has the forward momentum of the proverbial supertanker, but the general assumption is that down in the engine room things will progressively seize up. To some extent this pessimism has roots in a deep and general white misgiving about African competence, but it is also more solidly rooted in the poor educational level of even the black elite, perhaps the most dangerous and enduring inheritance of apartheid. Certainly, those institutions that have been under black administration longest—the HBUs (Historically Black Universities)—are synonyms for low standards, demoralized faculties, and endless student protest. Whites note that the older, once all-white universities are under pressure to transform themselves on the HBU model, and start planning to send their children to be educated abroad.

What is happening with doctors provides a sort of parable. The county's oldest and most prestigious medical school is at the University of Cape Town, but admission standards there have been so strongly affected by affirmative action criteria that white males, who would normally have made up perhaps 75 percent of the entry on merit, would now be lucky to secure 25 percent of the places. In the interests of equity and a proposed national health service the government is holding down doctors' pay, cutting the number of teaching hospitals, and has banned certain expensive operations—thus, for example, in the whole of the Johannesburg-Pretoria region, the country's economic powerhouse, the government hospitals are forbidden to carry out heart transplants. In the country that carried out the world's first heart transplants and has a long tradition of medical excellence, these changes have created demoralization and the emigration of at least half of each graduating class of doctors every year. The government rages against this behavior, talks about making it compulsory for doctors to work in deprived rural areas for several years, and is now importing two thousand doctors from Cuba. It is quite normal to find senior doctors predicting the wholesale collapse of medical education and state hospitals over the next few years.

The lower standards of education inflicted on blacks by Verwoerd's Bantu Education System mean that as educational institutions are fully integrated the rearguard battle waged by white teachers and parents to preserve standards is generally interpreted as a white racist attempt to maintain the exclusion of blacks or at least their consignment to lower grades, despite the workings of what is known here as "affirmative marking." This has produced strong counterpressures of "pass one, pass all" and a frank pressure to lower standards that horrifies whites. Many point at the country's senior university, Wits, where a black deputy vice chancellor, Professor Willie Makgoba, who claims that math was invented in Nigeria and that there is a worldwide plot to undermine African culture, was caught falsifying his résumé. Others point at the black principal of the oldest African university, Fort Hare, recently caught in an act of fragrant plagiarism, but by this stage of the argument those disputants who have college-age children are often shepherding their dependents toward the airport departure lounge.

The differing educational backgrounds of blacks and whites and the enormous black sensitivity that what whites mean by "lower standards" is "the congenital inferiority of blacks," often creates impossible work situations. One liberal friend of mine works in a research division where she is the only white. Recently her division was given a major project with an urgent deadline. As time slipped by it became clear that no one was doing any work on the project and that her attempts to bring up the subject were brushed aside on the general principle of *manaña*. My friend, knowing she was fundamentally better educated and equipped than her colleagues, began quietly taking files home in the evening and when, on deadline day, the panic

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over the project's noncompletion began, she was able to announce that the division's reputation was intact: she had completed the project the night before. Her colleagues furiously denounced her for having made them feel bad about themselves and inferior and indeed, for being a racist white who had clearly assumed in advance that her black colleagues were hopeless. They have angrily ordained that she is to be sent to Coventry (that is, not spoken to) for her racist white arrogance. She is still working in this silent, unhappy atmosphere though she tells me that there are signs of the boycott cracking and that she expects to be talking to at least most of her colleagues again soon. One could doubtless argue this case both ways, but the important point is simply that it is impossible to imagine the majority of whites putting up with such situations for long. Either they will flee into more private sectors of the economy where such conditions are less likely to obtain or they will leave.

To such worries many whites would add others. Already 12 percent of the adult population is HIV-positive and the figure is advancing rapidly toward the one-third level, which seems to be where the disease has plateaued in East Africa. It is politically incorrect to draw attention to the fact that the Ministers of Defense, the Police, Transport and probably several others are members of the Communist party and that the party wholly controls the intelligence services, the trade unions, and many of the parliamentary committees; nonetheless, many do notice it. President Mandela's invitation to Muammar al-Qaddafi and Fidel Castro to visit South Africa has perturbed others, as did his willingness to meet Louis Farrakhan and his announced willingness to meet with representatives of Hamas—this in the week following Hamas atrocities in Israel. The explanation of such bizarre behavior as rooted in sheer naiveté is not entirely reassuring. There is also the longer term fear that although Mandela may have the approval of all races, he will have to go by 1999, if not before, and that his likely successor, Thabo Mbeki, may not be able to hold together this deeply divided country.

This is quite a list, but South African whites are often a hardy lot, used to living with the impossible—with a murder rate ten times that of the United States, with border wars, an extreme climate, and so on. But the ironic result of these pressures is that, for all the nationalist rhetoric about "building a new nation," many whites (together with a fair smattering of Indians and blacks) are moving back toward a more colonial frame of mind, devoting enormous care to building prudential relationships with the metropole—building up an illegal nest egg in a hard currency foreign bank account, acquiring a foreign passport, placing a child in education abroad, acquiring internationally valid qualifications, or just taking out time to travel overseas to build a contact network there. Inevitably, this process has strong demographic implications, with whites becoming a steadily more elderly group—in sharper and sharper contrast to blacks, half of whom are under twenty.

This is a pattern we have seen elsewhere in settler Africa, with the white population gradually reduced to short-stay consultants, a few hardy farmers, and international aid workers. But this cannot happen in South Africa: the white population is simply too big, too much of it is too rooted to move, and, above all, most of the "colonial" strategies adumbrated above are simply not available to poorer whites, among whom there is growing unemployment and social distress. This is the group that could provide the muscle of a militant white reaction, but whether or not this occurs depends on whether a better equipped white group emerges to give social leadership to such a reaction. At present this seems unlikely, though recent polls show growing white support for a separate white *volkstaat*. As long as the economy continues to grow healthily, such trends will remain within bounds, but a downturn in the business cycle would see white disaffection grow. There could well be increased white support for potential separatist movements in the Western Cape or in KwaZulu-Natal, but even this would depend on alliances with the Cape Coloured or Buthelezi's Zulus, neither of which is unproblematic. The era when whites will take decisive political action on their own is over. That, in a sense, is what the change has been all about. □

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Yan Jiaqi

CHINA'S NATIONAL MINORITIES AND FEDERALISM

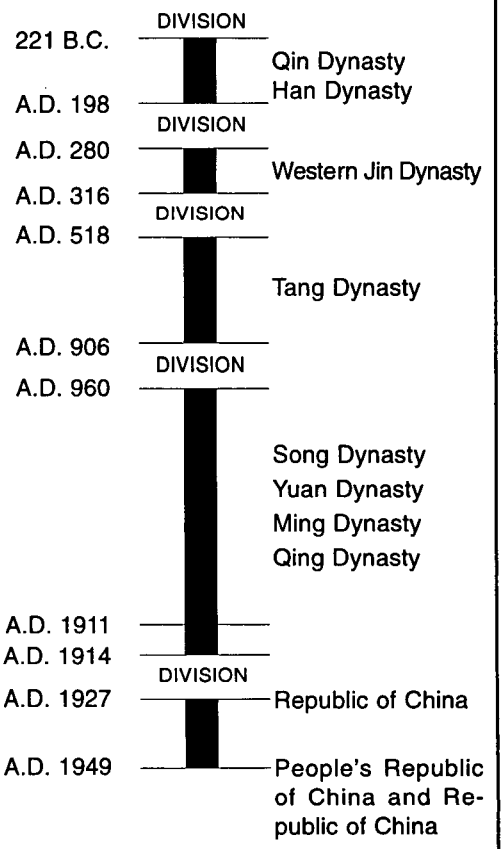
In the past half decade, the collapse of Communist-governed multinational states has inevitably brought disintegration: the seventy-year-old Soviet Union crumbled, Czechoslovakia divided peacefully, and civil war tore apart Yugoslavia. In China, the development of a market economy has led to a steady decline in the influence of Communist ideology; as the party's controls weaken, more and more people wonder if China will face traumas of division and secession.

For over two thousand years Chinese politics has been dominated by distinct, sometimes parallel cycles. The first is a cycle of dynasties. From the Qin and Han to the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, one dynasty perished and another was born. After the 1911 revolution overthrew the old imperial regime, and following two tumultuous, unstable decades, Chinese republics consolidated, first under the Nationalists (the *Guomindang*) and then under the Communists. But Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping were, each in his own way, like emperors, grabbing hold of power and refusing to relinquish it. They fashioned their own dynasties, although Taiwan has now evolved in a new direction.

The other cycle is characterized by alternating processes of unification and division. Casting a long glance back over Chinese history, we can see that fissures emerged regularly as the centralized power of a dynasty declined. Many people think that when Deng—today's "old emperor"—dies, and Communist party chief Jiang Zemin begins to lose a grip on power, division will set in.

But it won't be as it was after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, when warlords set up fiefdoms throughout the country. Other factors are now involved. One is the example of Taiwan. Since 1949, the regimes on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have proclaimed that there is only "one China." Yet an increasingly vocal movement in Taiwan wants the island to

Fig. 1: Historical Cycles



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be permanently severed from the mainland: the "Republic of China" would become the "Republic of Taiwan."

The second factor is the emergence of separatist movements in regions on the mainland, such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet. China has a vast territory; in it dwells a population of 1.2 billion with fifty-five different nationalities. Ninety-two percent are ethnic Han Chinese, but three minorities, the Uighurs, Mongols, and Tibetans, make up about 2 percent of the population, and together inhabit over half of China's land mass. Each has its own language, script, and religious beliefs. Two percent of the population in these areas are Han, although in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Han are 4 percent of the population.

China's largest minority, however, is the Zhuang. With a population of sixteen million, they reside mostly in the Wenshan region of Guangxi and Yunnan provinces. In Guangxi, where the majority are still Han, the Zhuang make up 38 percent of the population. Most of them can speak and write Chinese, although their native tongue is the Zhuang dialect, part of the Chinese-Tibetan language system. Historically they have been polytheists, believing in ancestor worship and animism, although they include a small number of Protestants and Catholics.

There are also 8.6 million people of the Hui nationality scattered all across China, largely interspersed with the Han. They are most concentrated in the official Hui Nationality Autonomous Region in Ningxia province, although only 1.6 million of them live there (accounting for 35 percent of the population). They are Muslims, but communicate in Chinese. The Zhuang and the Hui have repeatedly demanded distinct status as national minorities. However, they have never sought to secede and this is due, in part, to the fact that they all speak Chinese.

In contrast, separatist forces have long been active in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet, and recently they have found encouragement in the USSR's decline and in Taiwanese assertiveness. Xinjiang is the home of the Uighurs, who, almost seven million strong, compose some 45 percent of the population there and are Muslim. Few Han can be found in Xinjiang's south, where the Uighurs are densely settled and Chinese is rarely spoken. Uighur is similar to Turkic languages spoken in Turkey and some Central Asian countries. In 1933 and 1945, Uighur leaders made two attempts to establish a "Republic of Turkistan" in Xinjiang, but these were quickly suppressed.

Since then, Beijing's dominance over the region—by means of tight, centralized controls exercised from the capital—has led often to serious conflicts between local Han and Uighurs. Following one incident in 1962, some seventy thousand Uighers fled en masse from the Yining and Tacheng areas to the Soviet Union. At various times in the 1980s there were protests and riots, most of which were instigated by disputes concerning nationality and religion. In April 1990, ten people died when a large demonstration turned violent in Aketao County near Kashi. Nowadays, the idea of Xinjiang independence has thousands of backers, and there are activists on its behalf in Alma-Ata, the capital of the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan.[1]

There are 3.4 million Mongolians in Inner Mongolia, while in neighboring Outer Mongolia (the independent state of Mongolia), there are only 1.9 million. Genghis Khan, who in the thirteenth century founded an empire that straddled Europe and Asia, is their greatest hero. In 1990, Outer Mongolia ended its Communist dictatorship and then held free elections for the first time. Democratization led to a burst of national consciousness, replete with public accolades in Genghis Khan's memory throughout both Mongolias. In this atmosphere, movements advocating the secession of Inner Mongolia from China emerged. Their goal is to merge with Outer Mongolia to form a "Greater Mongolia." Not surprisingly, pro-independence activists have faced harsh repression by Beijing. Some separatists have gone into exile in the Outer Mongolian capital of Ulan Batur and use the city as a base from which to agitate for Inner Mongolian independence.[2]

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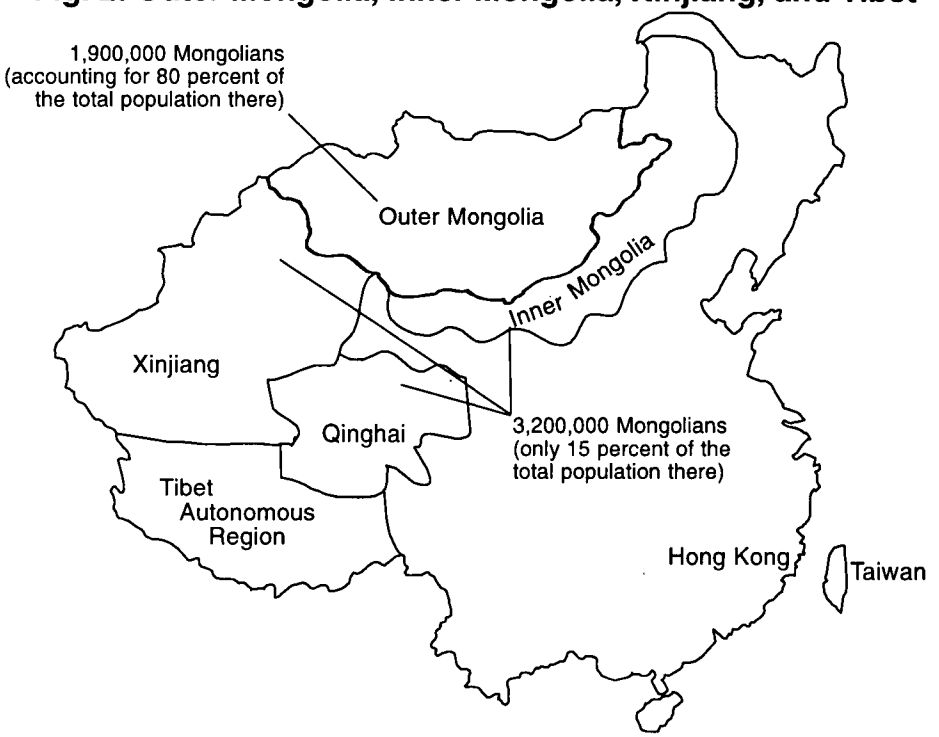
Fig. 2: Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet



Distinct Tibet

Tibet's independence movement is rooted in a historical experience quite different from those of Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia; in fact, the relation between Tibet and the central government has been different from all the other provinces in China's interior. The reason is simple: before the revolution, Tibet enjoyed substantial autonomy. Tibet was under Mongol influence from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century and then under the (relatively) light dominance of the Qing, the last imperial dynasty. The central government was primarily concerned with controlling Tibet's foreign policy, so that although it was denied the right to make treaties with other countries, the area was able to have its own army, raise taxes, and make most of its own laws. Few troops were kept there under the Qing, and it was only in the event of foreign aggression or internal disturbances that soldiers were sent in.

The Tibetans have vigorously resisted attempts by the central authorities to impose on them any regime resembling that used to govern the Han. After the 1911 revolution, Tibet freed itself, only to be subdued by Mao in 1951. Since then Beijing has asserted its central authority while maintaining a facade of formal autonomy. Tibetans have held many prominent positions in their native region, but such office holders have been obliged to do Beijing's bidding. The religious distinctiveness of Tibetans, who are devout followers of Lama Buddhism led by the exiled Dalai Lama, has been a major source of conflict with Beijing. (The Dalai Lama fled after an anti-Chinese rebellion in 1959.) During the Cultural Revolution scores of their monasteries were sacked and their relics desecrated or destroyed. There have been repeated incidents of violence against protesting monks and nuns.

The dictatorial and corrupt nature of the central government, together with the cultural differences between the Tibetans and the Han, have all encouraged separatism, though its advocates have been repeatedly repressed by Beijing. In addition, more than a hundred thousand Tibetans live outside of the country today, and most of them support independence.

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Obstacles

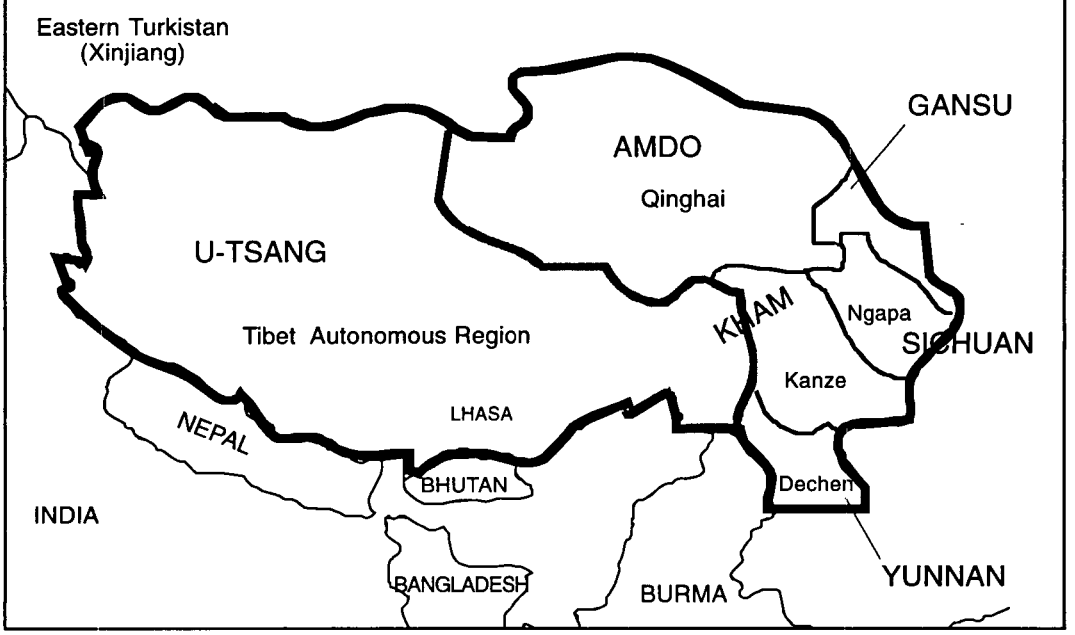
Separatist movements within China face a major obstacle: the Han majority, numbering over a billion people, are devoted to the idea of a united China under a system of centralized state power. Throughout history, whenever China fragments, this idea has returned tenaciously to promote reconsolidation. As historian Daniel W. Y. Kwok points out, "the idea of unity is firmly rooted in the thinking of Chinese. From the time when the Qin dynasty . . . unified China, and later in the Han period when the next step was taken toward unification, the ideal and reality of unifying the whole country have permeated society and culture, and have never left the imagination of the Chinese under any of the empires. Although sometimes division has actually occurred, the ideal of unity has become ever more entrenched with time."

Taiwanese assertiveness, Beijing worries, encourages separatists in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia; if these three regions actually became independent, China would lose half its territory. Tibetan independence, remarks a soldier stationed in Tibet, would "expose China's soft underbelly. From the point of view of strategy—especially national security—that cannot be permitted."[3]

There is another "natural" obstacle to independence hopes for Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia. The majority of Uighurs, Mongolians, and Tibetans are scattered throughout China and live interspersed with the Han. In northern Xinjiang, Uighurs are mixed in with other nationalities, while in the south their numbers are densely concentrated. Still, from a geopolitical perspective, it is almost impossible to imagine the south separating alone.

Mongolians make up the vast majority in Outer Mongolia (population 1.9 million), but in Inner Mongolia there are 3.4 million Mongolians. The latter account for only 15.8 percent of the inhabitants, which makes independence for Inner Mongolia an unlikely prospect. "The ideal of the Mongolian people is a united state of Greater Mongolia," says Bache, chair of a U.S.–based Mongolian human rights organization. Nevertheless, he argues that the only realistic option is to try to resolve Mongolian-Chinese relations on the basis of a "federal system." A Mongolian scholar, Dao Erjie, also suggests—

Fig. 3: Tibet Autonomous Region and Greater Tibet



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with some qualification—that instead of pressing for secession of Inner Mongolia from China or an attempt to create Greater Mongolia, it would be better to establish "a federal system with other parts of China, on the condition that Mongolians are not deprived of the right to independence."

As to Tibetans—there are 4.6 million of them, of whom 44 percent live in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and 52.3 percent live elsewhere in China. A small fraction resides in exile in India, Nepal, Europe, or America. Tibetans make up 95 percent of the population of Tibet proper, but fewer than half the inhabitants of the other regions. If the Tibetan Autonomous Zone alone were proclaimed independent, most Tibetans would still be living outside it. On the other hand, if "Greater Tibet," which includes both the Autonomous Region and other areas of China where Tibetans live, were proclaimed independent, Tibetans would be less than half the population in this new state.

The Dalai Lama has favored a popular election to decide Tibet's future, and is willing to allow all citizens of Greater Tibet to vote; the result, however, would likely be rejection of independence. On the other hand, if the Autonomous Region alone were to proclaim independence, this might well result in a prolonged civil war, reminiscent of Bosnia, in other areas where Tibetans live. But the Dalai Lama, in a 1988 discussion with members of the European Parliament, also suggested that federalism might solve Tibet's problems. His idea was to leave foreign policy in Beijing's hands while making Tibet a truly "autonomous democratic political entity" within China.

A Federal Alternative

It seems to me that only some type of genuine federalism can provide a balanced response to separatist demands. There needs to be a compromise between the urge to independence of minorities and the aspirations to unity of the Han majority. My idea is what might be called a "confederated federal system." There would be two kinds of component states within China—"ordinary" and "special" ones. Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Taiwan, along with Hong Kong, Macao, Guangxi, and Ningxia would be in the "special" category.

Special component states would have a relatively loose relationship to the federation as a whole, whereas ordinary component states would be more tightly linked. (Although dissimilarities between the United States and China are great, Americans might think of this as somewhat like the contrast between the status of states under the Articles of Confederation and under the Constitution.) In a federal system, the interaction between the provinces and cities of mainland China and the government in Beijing would also undergo some fundamental changes. The traditional system in which power is centralized in the capital would end and each province and city

Fig. 4: Component States in a Federal China

ORDINARY MEMBERS	Autonomous Provinces	Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Gansu, Liaoning, etc. (22 states)
	Autonomous Municipalities	Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin
SPECIAL MEMBERS	Autonomous States	Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Guangxi
	Special Regions	Hong Kong and Macao

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would fashion a local political structure suited to the nature of the region. Constitutional protections would guarantee a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong and Macao, and Beijing would not be able to renege on them, as was stipulated in the joint declarations issued by China and, respectively, England and Portugal. A federal system would also provide for the unification of Taiwan and mainland China, but on a peaceful and equal basis. Finally, federalism would allow China's different regions to express fully their special characteristics, fostering regional diversity.

This idea is not new; in fact it goes back to the nineteenth century. However, federalism never became a reality, primarily because Chinese unity was always the result of war or violent revolution. The best opportunities for federalism have been when numerous centers of power emerged in the country. But then violence usually brought about unification and the dream of federalism disappeared. In my view, federalism must come from a spirit of nonviolence.

Nowadays, the idea of a federal China is attracting attention because it reflects new social and historical demands. These include the breach between the mainland and Taiwan, the rise of independence movements in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, and the need for increasing regional autonomy due to the marketization of the economy. The first step toward a federal China must be democratization of the mainland. Then, on a democratic and confederal-federal basis, we could begin to unify, peacefully, the mainland with Taiwan. This, in turn, would open the path to resolving, in a similar way, the questions of Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang. China would still be unified but in a special way; with a confederal-federal system, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and all the minority regions would have autonomy together with a stake in the future of the country as a whole.

Translated from the Chinese by JENNIFER HOLDAWAY □

Notes

[1] See "A Storm Rises in Xinjiang" and "National Minorities on the Border are Restless," *Yazhou Zhoukan*, April 29, 1990; "Xinjiang—A Place Whose 'Heart' Is Not In China," *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, May 14, 1990; "The Xinjiang Separatist Movement Swells," *Ouzhou Ribao*, August 17, 1990.

[2] See Mo Min, "The Outbreak of the Independence Movement in Inner Mongolia," *Zheng Ming*, July 1990 and "The Unity of Inner Mongolia and China," *Zhongguo Zhichun*, December 1995; also, Yan Shanxue, "The Trend towards Separatism in Inner Mongolia Grows," *Zhongguo Zhichun*, September 1992.

[3] Deng Minghai, "The Third Voice of Tibetan Chinese," *Zhongshi Zhoukan*, 1992.

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Bhikhu Parekh

INDIA'S DIVERSITY

No country in the world matches India in its diversity. It has more than six hundred eighty-seven million Hindus, more than one hundred million Muslims, more than nineteen million Christians, more than sixteen million Sikhs, more than nine million Buddhists and Jains, and just under half a million Zoroastrians. Although the religious minorities are spread throughout the country, most of them are concentrated in a small number of states and constitute powerful political presences.

India also has over sixty million tribal people who live in government-designated "reserved" areas scattered over most of India. They form majorities in three states. India has thirty-five languages spoken by more than a million people each, and more than twenty-two thousand dialects.

The ethnic diversity is as broad as it is deep. Tribal people in the northeast are ethnically different from those in Gujarat, and both again from their counterparts in the south. North India has been exposed to waves of foreigners since the time of Alexander the Great, and especially from the eighth century, when Muslims came to India from Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Gujarati merchants, mainly Muslim, financed Arab slave traders, with the result that some coastal areas of Gujarat contain descendants of black slaves and their racially mixed progeny.

None of these communities is cohesive. Speakers of local languages belong to different religious, ethnic, and cultural communities, and almost all the religious communities speak the local languages. Although Urdu is supposed to be the community language of many Muslims, large sections of them in many parts of the country have no knowledge of it. This is equally true of the Christians, most of whom are far more at home in local languages than in English, which is generally regarded as their community language. By and large the Sikhs have stuck to their language wherever they have settled in India.

Cultural beliefs and practices also cut across linguistic and religious boundaries. Because many of the religious minorities are Hindu converts, they retain many Hindu beliefs and practices. Islam in India is quite different from its counterparts elsewhere, and even in India it varies from one region to another. Hindu castes or caste-like divisions are common among Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians. Indeed, in several churches in south India recent converts enjoy lower status than their older counterparts, and the lower caste converts sit separately from the rest. For their part, the Hindus have absorbed Muslim and Christian practices, and some of them see nothing wrong in worshiping at the shrines of all three religions.

The Hindu "Majority"

Although the Hindus formally constitute the majority of the population, that number can be misleading. What is clumsily called Hinduism is in fact a family of sects, each with its own deities, theology, scriptures, temple, and rituals. Although broadly aware of sharing a religious heritage, they cherish their distinct histories and identities. Hindus never developed the sharp and exclusive collective self-consciousness characteristic of such credal religions as Christianity and Islam, and do not have a single name for their religion: the term Hindu itself is a Muslim

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corruption of an original Greek word. Hindus are also divided into castes along with all their regional variations. Brahmins are regarded as the highest caste in many parts of India, but they are looked down upon in several parts of the south, where some even avoid social contacts with them. The "scheduled castes" (once called "untouchables") constitute nearly 16 percent of the population. Their relationship with the mainstream of Hindu society is deeply ambiguous, for they both are and are not a part of it. As for the so-called Caste Hindus, they are further divided into subgroups, some of whom have little contact with each other.

With India made up of so many criss-crossing communities, every Indian is the bearer of several identities. An average Indian has multiple affections and loyalties: while Muslims in one part of India, for example, share their religion with their counterparts elsewhere, they share their language, customs, and even religious practices with local Hindus. These bonds are often stronger than ties with Muslims elsewhere.

Many Identities

All this means that the concepts of majority and minority explain little in India. Because individuals belong to several different communities, one might be in the majority of one community, in the minority of another. Or one might be in the minority within a specific district but in the majority within one's state, while a minority again nationally. In such a situation individuals have neither the conceptual resources nor the need to identify themselves as belonging to majority and minority communities. The concepts of majority and minority become central to a community's self-understanding when, for some reason, one of its several identities is abstracted and privileged. That identity then becomes the basis for classifying and enumerating people.

The idea of *national* majorities and minorities does not arise unless two further conditions are met. First, the country as a whole must become the primary point of orientation; second, there must be an identity with a national reach. In India languages and ethnicities are mostly regional and lack national reach. Only religion provides the latter, and it is only when religion becomes the politically significant basis of self-identification that the concepts of national majority and minority acquire currency. This is precisely what began to happen in India for the first time during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Thanks to the enthusiastic Hindu response to westernization, the rise of a westernized Hindu middle class, the decline of the Muslim aristocracy, and the consolidation of colonial rule, Muslims began to feel left out and to ask for special protection. This suited the British rulers, who granted them, and then other minorities, separate electorates, thereby making religion an integral part of the colonial state. As the struggle for independence, predominantly led by the Hindus, gained momentum from the 1920s onward, Muslim leaders began to fear Hindu domination and speak of the need for their own Muslim-majority state. The result was much Hindu-Muslim violence, and the eventual partition of the country in 1947.

The partition had a traumatic effect on Indian self-understanding. It made the ideas of majority and minority the dominant currency of political discourse. For the first time non-Hindus began to see themselves as cohesive minorities and Hindus to see themselves as an actual or potential majority. The ideas of majority and minority soon traveled to many other areas of life, giving rise to ideas of collective or group rights. At the national level, religion became an extremely sensitive issue and an easily mobilizable basis of political identity; at regional levels, language and ethnicity took its place.

Liberalism and Pluralism

Independent India had three possible ways of dealing with its minorities. It could have opted for a strictly liberal strategy, relying on the logic of democracy and industrialization and on judicious policies to integrate the minorities into a cohesive nation. The concepts of majority and minority would thereby have had no more than numerical significance. Alternately, India could have pursued a corporatist strategy, in which different communities had autonomous status and ran the state as a partnership. The third possibility was to combine liberalism and pluralism, superimposing a liberal state on self-governing re-

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ligious communities. The Constitution of India institutionalized the third strategy, and its authors clearly hoped that in time minorities would have enough confidence in the Indian state to enable it to progress on liberal individualist principles alone.

The combined liberal-pluralist strategy included a commitment by the Indian state to respect minority cultures and religions. The state funds minority schools and cultural institutions, and in some parts of the country it even pays the salaries of Muslim religious officials and subsidizes their pilgrimages to Mecca. More important, the state leaves the religious communities free to govern themselves in personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession, and inheritance. In other domains—criminal law, laws relating to the economy, and so forth—the state makes all laws it deems necessary. The original hope was that all Indian citizens would one day be governed by a single personal law or civil code, but the Constitution didn't say how or when this would come about. Although the Constitution established a largely liberal list of fundamental rights, it remained ambiguous about whether minority personal laws were subject to their constraints. Supreme Court judgments later ruled that they were not. The Constitution also conferred a special status on the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir, giving it powers denied to other states. Subsequently created "tribal states" also enjoy considerable autonomy, and Indians from elsewhere are not at liberty to settle and buy land in them. In important respects, then, the Indian state resembles the asymmetrical federation that the Québécois are pressing for in Canada.

The Indian state also follows a policy of preferential treatment for "untouchables" and less-developed tribes in education, the civil service, and in publicly owned companies. India's founders believed affirmative action was justified to redress past wrongs and to integrate previously disadvantaged communities into the national mainstream, giving them a stake in the country and thereby broadening the state's legitimacy.

Finally, although the framers of the Constitution did not—it would seem deliberately—mention the word, they clearly wanted a secular state, and this is what, despite occasional aberrations, India has remained. This does not mean that religion is kept out of politics altogether. There is no ban on religious parties or the political use of religious idioms. Nor does it mean that religion is kept entirely out of the state. Indeed, the national anthem and the national motto have a distinctly religious resonance, and the colors of the national flag are widely taken to represent religious ideas. The Indian state is secular in four ways: it does not favor any particular religion; it respects all religions equally; in all secular matters its authority is final; and although its leaders may have religious preferences, their decisions are guided in principle solely by the moral and material well-being of its citizens.

Although successive Indian governments have introduced variations in the liberal-pluralist strategy, the basic design has remained intact, a political compass in the murky waters of Indian politics. Respect for the personal laws of minority communities has gone a long way to reassure them that the state honors their cultural identities. This has sometimes come at the expense of desirable internal reforms. Indeed, one such effort, to reform the Hindu personal law in the 1950s, met with considerable resistance. While a uniform civil code clearly has something to be said for it, it cannot be developed in the absence of a broad consensus, a shared culture, and mutual trust.

The protective policy toward the religious and cultural minorities, however, has a negative side. The country's fragmented educational system has hindered the emergence of a sense of common citizenship. Because minority status secures certain privileges, it has provoked resentments among the majority Hindu community. This became clear a few years ago when Ramkrishna Mission, a much admired reformist Hindu cultural organization, asked to be classified not as a "Hindu" but as a "minority" organization! It would seem that everyone wants to be in a political majority and a cultural minority.

As for affirmative action, government programs have realized many of its symbolic objectives, but it remains necessary. It has, however,

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several serious problems. First, the mere set-aside of places for the disadvantaged hardly begins to tackle the consequences of centuries-old inequalities. The government needs to allocate greater resources to primary education, to provide much more start-up capital and to develop commercial skills among the target populations. Second, because the state thought preferential treatment was sufficient, it did nothing to combat the widespread discrimination against the lower castes and tribes, not to mention Muslims, in the private sector, which has over twenty times more jobs than the state. (India has some of the weakest anti-discrimination laws among the liberal democracies.)

The secular dimension of the liberal-pluralist strategy has served the country reasonably well. It has made the state legitimate in the eyes of religious minorities, and enabled it to tackle evils perpetrated in the name of religion. On the other hand, the state has felt free to reform Hindu personal law, partly with the hope that this would encourage corresponding reforms in the minority communities. In so doing, however, it implicitly acted as the state of the Hindus (though not a Hindu state); this encouraged the Hindus to use the state to promote their interests and compromised its secular character. Since Indian secularism largely comes from the fear of politicized religion, it is essentially negative and lacks self-confidence, consistency, and a clear sense of direction. Religious parties have found it easy to manipulate the Indian state; the government alternately placates and resists them, depending on political expediency. Not surprisingly, secularism is today one of the most contentious issues in Indian politics. Many Hindus think that it is mainly meant to regulate and restrain them; the minorities fear it is weak, timid, and likely to disintegrate under Hindu pressures.

The liberal-pluralist strategy has had complex consequences. It has generally stood India well for nearly half a century and helped to hold the country together. It stabilized the country after the birth-trauma of partition, reassured the minorities, and created a secure framework within which the different communities are able to form alliances, and fight for shared goals. However, its weaknesses are increasingly coming to the fore. New Delhi is facing an increasingly angry Hindu majority on the one hand and increasingly discontented minorities on the other. Without some new thinking, the country is headed for dangerous times. □

ED. NOTE: This article was written before the recent elections.

I am grateful to Ashutosh Varshney and Pratap Mehta for their helpful comments on this paper.

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Shyam Selvadurai

RIOT JOURNAL: SRI LANKA

Shyam Selvadurai's first novel, Funny Boy, *was published in the United States this past spring, having received widespread acclaim when it initially appeared two years ago in England, India, and Canada. It tells the story of Arjie, a young, gay Tamil, who grows up in the midst of the conflicts between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. In "Riot Journal," the novel's epilogue, Arjie and his upper-middle-class family are besieged by the communal violence of mid-summer 1983. Selvadurai, who was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1965, now lives in Toronto.* — EDS.

JULY 25, 1983, 6:00 A.M. Two hours ago the phone rang in the hall, waking us all. At first I thought that I was dreaming, but then I heard Amma and Appa's door open and I knew that I was awake. By the time I got to my door, Sonali, Diggy, and Neliya Aunty had already come out into the hall. Appa was on the phone, and from the expression on his face, we knew that something had happened. Finally he put the phone down. "That was Mala," he said. Then he told us that there was trouble in Colombo. All the Tamil houses near the Kanaththa Cemetery had been burnt. We stared at him, unable to believe what he was saying. "Why?" Amma asked. Appa explained that it was because of the thirteen soldiers who were killed by the Tigers two days ago. The funeral was held last night and the mob at the cemetery went on a rampage. Appa tried to dismiss the whole thing. He told us to go to bed, that it was only a rumor, that there was probably some gang fight in a slum around Kanaththa which people were calling a communal riot. But I haven't been able to sleep. I have tried to read, but that is impossible, too. The only thing for me to do is write.

From the dining room, I can hear the murmur of Neliya Aunty's and Amma's voices and the clatter of plates and spoons. It is their attempt to provide some normalcy to the day. Yet all it does, this everyday sound, is make me realize how frighteningly different this day has been so far.

9:30 A.M. Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty came to visit an hour ago. The moment we saw their faces we knew that the situation was serious. Amma invited them to have breakfast with us. They had been to the area around Kanaththa. The rumors are true. All the Tamil houses there are burnt, and the trouble has begun to spread to other parts of Colombo as well. Chithra Aunty started to say something more, but Sena Uncle stopped her and nodded towards us children. She became silent. After breakfast, my parents, Neliya Aunty, Sena Uncle, and Chithra Aunty went into Appa's study and closed the door behind them. Diggy, Sonali, and I crowded around the door, trying to hear what was happening, but they were speaking very softly. Sena Uncle said something, and Amma drew in her breath. "No," she said. "No. That can't be." Chithra Aunty said, "Shhh," and they spoke quietly again. When they came out, Amma and Neliya Aunty looked frightened.

Once Chithra Aunty and Sena Uncle had left, Amma called us into the dining room. "We're going to spend a few days at Chithra Aunty and Sena Uncle's house," she said.

This was not something we had expected. "Why, Amma?" Sonali asked. "Never mind why," Amma said. But then she felt a little sorry, for she said,"Don't worry, it's just a precaution. It's

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safer this way." Yet we knew she was lying. The situation must be very bad, for she has sent Anula away to stay with her aunt.

Amma said that we can only take a knapsack, otherwise it would look suspicious. We are supposed to bring a few clothes and one other thing that is important to us. I can't decide which thing to take. I have asked the others what they are taking. Diggy says he's not taking anything, but I noticed that some of his Willard Price books are gone. Amma is taking all the family albums. She says that if anything happens they will remind us of happier days. The picture of my grandparents is missing from Neliya Aunty's dressing table, and Sonali is taking two of her dolls, even though she doesn't play with dolls anymore. We are not using our own car because it is too small for all of us. Sena Uncle is going to return with his van.

Amma and Appa have phoned the other aunts and uncles. So far, they are okay. Ammachi and Appachi's area is particularly bad. Some of their neighbors have offered to hide them in their house if anything happens.

The radio news is beginning again. We have listened to the broadcasts at 6:00, 7:30, and 8:45, but there is still no mention of the trouble. If not for the phone call and Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty's visit, we would think that nothing was going on in Colombo. After the last broadcast, Appa looked at Amma significantly and said, "No curfew." From the way he said it, I assume that this has something to do with what Sena Uncle told him.

11:00 A.M. I have learned what Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty told my parents. But I wish I had not found out.

I was in the garden trying to read when I heard the sound of Amma's and Appa's voices. Although I couldn't make out the words, just from the tone of Amma's voice I could tell that it was important. So I went and stood under the study window. "How can the government be doing this?" Amma was saying bitterly. "After all, we Tamils helped vote them in."

"We're not one hundred percent sure that they are behind the rioting," my father said.

"Of course they are. If not, why aren't they declaring curfew, and why aren't the police and army stopping the mobs?"

My father didn't respond.

"It has been planned in advance. Otherwise, how could the mobs get electoral lists so quickly?"

After that, both my parents were silent.

At first I didn't comprehend the reason for the electoral lists, but now I have thought about it and I understand. Since the mobs have electoral lists, they know which houses are Tamil and which houses aren't. This means that we have no chance of escaping if the mob comes down our road. And if they do, there will be no police to stop them.

12:30 P.M. The phones are dead, and for the first time I'm really frightened. Where is Sena Uncle? The van should have been here an hour ago. Has something happened to him?

1:00 P.M. The government has now declared curfew. Anyone caught on the road without a curfew pass will be shot on sight. I am so relieved, because this must mean that the government is not behind the rioting and that Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty's story was wrong. After the announcement I could see relief on my parents' faces too.

Of course this means that Sena Uncle won't be able to pick us up. Appa says that it is all right. He didn't really want to leave the house in the first place, and since the government has declared curfew, the situation will soon be under control. Amma didn't agree. She said she would prefer to go to Chithra Aunty's house for the night.

3:00 P.M. The announcement of the curfew has not stopped the riots, and in fact the fighting has got worse. We have finally learned why Sena Uncle did not come for us.

About an hour ago we heard a bicycle bell outside. Then someone banged on our gate. The sound was so loud in the stillness that all the neighborhood dogs began to bark. Appa cautioned us to stay in the dining room. He went quietly down the hall and looked out through the drawing-room window. Then he signaled to us that it was all right. When we came to the gate, Appa was already talking to a man on a bicycle. He was a clerk from Appa's office. When he saw us, he stopped talking and looked at Appa, as if uncertain whether he should continue. Appa waved his hand and said, "They might as well

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know." I noticed that some of the other neighbors were watching from behind their gates. Appa turned to us and said, "Sena sent him. He had to abandon the van on Galle Road because some thugs stole all the petrol from it." Amma asked what they would want the petrol for, and Appa told the clerk to tell his story again.

Now Perera Aunty and Uncle, our next-door neighbors, came out of their gate and joined us. The clerk began to repeat his story. He told us that once he'd heard about the riots, he'd left the office. As he cycled towards Galle Road he saw that all the Tamil shops had been set on fire and the mobs were looting everything. The police and army just stood by, watching, and some of them even cheered the mobs and joined in the looting and burning. When he had finally made it to Galle Road, it was crowded with traffic going in all directions. Some motorists had abandoned their cars in the middle of the road and started to make the rest of the journey on foot. The pavements were no better, he said. They were packed with people hurrying home from work. Then, not far in the distance, he had heard a sound like a gunshot. Now the pedestrians began to scatter. When the pavement had cleared he had seen a terrible sight. There was a car in the middle of the road with a family inside it. The car was surrounded by thugs, and near it he saw Sena Uncle's van. The thugs were syphoning petrol out of it and pouring the petrol on the car. Sena Uncle stood by watching helplessly. The clerk called out to him, and he saw him and came to the pavement. That was when Sena Uncle had asked him to take the message to us. Before he left, the clerk had taken one last look at the car. Even from where he stood, he could smell petrol. The family in the car were simply staring out at the thugs as if they didn't realize what was going on. Now one of the thugs began to ask around for a match. At this point the clerk had left. He had got on his bicycle and ridden away as fast as he could.

Ever since I heard this story, I have not been able to stop thinking about that family in the car. I thought I would go into the garden and sit on the swing for a little, but when I got there I didn't feel like it. Amma, Neliya Aunty, and Sonali were in the garden, tending to the rose bushes and

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anthuriums. I could tell that they, too, were trying not to think about what the clerk had said. Neliya Aunty says that there is nothing to do now but to trust in God and pray that we will be saved. Amma says that the best thing is to keep busy and hope for the best. But how can we hope for the best after hearing such a story?

Appa is in his study reading the newspaper and waiting for the next news bulletin. Diggy is doing his exercises, and I can hear the sound of the dumbbells every time he puts them down on the ground.

6:45 P.M. A little while ago, Amma and Appa asked us children to come into the dining room. Appa looked stern and serious, Amma was very gentle. She explained to us that we have to be prepared if the mob comes. She and Appa have worked out an escape plan. She asked us to follow her onto the back verandah. In the back garden, I saw that our ladder has been placed against the side wall. If the mob comes, we are to climb up the ladder and jump over the wall into the Pereras' back garden. Perera Aunty and Perera Uncle will hide us in their storeroom. Even though Appa didn't think it was necessary, Amma made each of us go up the ladder so that we could get a feel for it. When I reached the top of the ladder, I saw that Perera Aunty and Uncle were watching us from the other side. Throughout the whole exercise, Amma kept saying that we were only doing this in case the mob came and that it was all a big "if." Yet I know that this is not so. I noticed that Amma has removed her thali and gold bangles. She must have sent them next door with her jewelry box. Appa also sent our birth certificates and bankbooks. They know that there is going to be trouble. Like me, they are certain that the mob will come. It's only a question of when.

11:30 P.M. This waiting is terrible. I wish the mob would come so that this dreadful waiting would end. No, I don't wish that. It is the last thing I want. Yet I know it's going to happen. There is no doubt in my mind. So wouldn't it be better if it happened sooner rather than later? Then we would be put out of this misery.

I am using my torch to write this. Everyone is supposed to be asleep, but I don't think anyone is. Appa is doing the watch right now, and I can hear him clear his throat from time to time. We have gone to bed completely dressed, even with our shoes on. Amma told us to wear jeans or something that was easy to move around in. Neliya Aunty, who always wears a sari, has borrowed a pair of Amma's pants. All the adults, too, have torches. In case of any trouble, one of them will wake us up. Without turning on any of the lights in the house, we must go into the dining room with our bags.

JULY 26, 12:30 P.M. I have just read my last entry and it seems unbelievable that only thirteen hours ago I was sitting on my bed writing in this journal. A year seems to have passed since that time. Our lives have completely changed. I try and try to make sense of it, but it just won't work.

How quickly everything happened. I was lying on my bed, reading, and then I must have fallen asleep. Scared as I was, my body finally gave out. The next thing I knew, Neliya Aunty was shaking my shoulder. I opened my eyes and her torch was shining in my face. "Darling," she said, "it's time." She said it so gently that for a moment I thought it was time to get up for school. Then I heard the chants of the mob. I sat up in bed, and I must have got up too fast, because I fell off it. "Shhh," Neliya Aunty said.

I stared at her, unable to move. I tried to push myself up, but my legs seemed to have lost all their feeling. It was like a horrible dream. Neliya Aunty bent down and helped me up. I must have been crying, because I remember her saying to me, "Don't cry, child." Then we went into the dining room. The others were already there.

The chants of the mob were getting louder. Appa motioned to us and we followed him onto the back verandah. It was so dark outside that we could barely see ahead of us. The back garden looked menacing, and the trees and bushes seemed strange and unfamiliar. Even the verandah seemed alien. Amma shone her torch on the steps so we would not fall as we were going down into the garden. Appa was standing by the ladder. He indicated for Sonali to go up first, and he shone his light along the ladder. She began to climb to the top. By now the sounds of the mob had got even closer. "Faster," my father hissed at Sonali. She seemed to be climbing very slowly.

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Finally she reached the top and sat on the wall. After a slight pause, she jumped.

Now it was my turn. I was in such a hurry to get to the top that I missed a rung and nearly fell down the ladder. "Be careful," Amma whispered up at me. I had reached the top of the ladder now. I could see Perera Aunty and Uncle waiting for us on the other side. She had a kerosene lamp in her hand. From the top of the ladder I could see the glow of the mob's flares as they drew near. Perera Aunty beckoned to me urgently. I sat on the wall and, after looking fearfully at the distance between myself and the ground, I closed my eyes and jumped. Neliya Aunty was the next to come up the ladder, and then Amma. When Diggy came to the top, he sat on the wall and waited for Appa. Between the two of them, they pulled the ladder up the wall and threw it into the Pereras' back garden. Then they jumped down. We followed Perera Aunty into the house, going down a dark corridor to the kitchen. The servant was waiting in there, and Perera Aunty told her to hold open the door that led into the storeroom. We all crowded inside. It was a small room, and it smelled of raw rice and Maldive fish and other dry provisions. "I'm going to shut the door now," Perera Aunty said apologetically. My father nodded. She left the lamp on a shelf and went out of the storeroom, closing the door behind her. Now we were all alone.

There was a high window in the storeroom and we all looked up at it, as if through it we hoped to see what was happening. For some strange reason we could no longer hear the chants of the mob. Sonali crept close to me, and I put my arm around her. The first noise we heard was a crash and the shattering of glass. "Front door," Amma whispered. Then other sounds started. Cracking and banging and the dragging of heavy objects across the floor. I tried to place them, but it was impossible to tell where they were coming from. Then, through the storeroom window, we saw a spiral of smoke. "Fire," Neliya Aunty said in a panicked voice. "Oh God, they are setting the house on fire."

Soon the darkness of the night was broken by a golden light, as if the sun were rising. The light even came into the storeroom, illuminating our upturned faces. Then, gradually, the light subsided and the darkness returned. The mob had left by now, and there was a terrible silence, broken only by the sound of wooden beams giving way with a groan and crashing to the ground.

After a while we heard the storeroom door open. Perera Aunty and Perera Uncle came in. They just stood there looking at us, not knowing what to say. "They've gone," Perera Uncle finally said. My father nodded and stood up. "What's the damage?" he asked.

Perera Uncle shook his head. "I couldn't see."

"I should take a look," Appa said.

"No," Amma said, alarmed. "It's not safe. Wait till morning."

Perera Uncle and Aunty nodded in agreement. "You never know whether they'll come back or not," Perera Uncle said.

We heard the rattling of teacups in the dining room. "Come and have some tea," Perera

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Aunty said.

The sheer normality of her offer took us aback, yet when we were seated at the table with the hot teacups in our hands, the familiar taste of tea was comforting.

Once the sky had got lighter, we went to look at our house. The fire had completely died down by now. I stood at the gate, staring at the devastation in front of me. If not for the gate, which was still intact, I would never have been able to say that this had been our house. Many thoughts went through my mind as I stood there. The first thing that struck me was how much smaller the house seemed, now that most of the roof had caved in.

It was dangerous to go into the house, but we couldn't stop ourselves. I was struck by how uniform and characterless the rooms looked, with their debris of furniture and charred walls. They, too, seemed to have shrunk in size. I went to my room and looked around. As I examined the charred things on the floor, I was suddenly aware that records were not music but plastic, which had now melted into black puddles; that my books were mere paper that had browned and now came apart between my fingers. Legs, posts, and arms of well-known furniture, once polished smooth and rich brown in hue, now that they had cracked open revealed the whiteness of common wood. I observed all this with not a trace of remorse, not a touch of sorrow for the loss and destruction around me. Even now I feel no sorrow. I try to remind myself that the house is destroyed, that we will never live in it again, but my heart refuses to understand this.

While we were searching through the house, we heard a van stop. It was Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty. They had finally been able to get some petrol and secure a curfew pass. We went to meet them. They stared at the house for a long time. Then Chithra Aunty began to cry. Amma went to her and tried to comfort her. There was something ironic about that. Amma comforting Chithra Aunty. Yet I understood it. Chithra Aunty was free to cry. We couldn't, for if we started we would never stop.

By then, the other neighbors had come to see the devastation. They were saddened by it, and a few of them said that when they looked at the house they were ashamed to say they were Sinhalese.

Before leaving, Amma, Neliya Aunty, and Sonali collected whatever had not been destroyed. In my room, I had thought to do the same but then left everything as it was. My father and Diggy, too, took nothing with them.

When we were leaving in the van, Mrs. Bandara from next door brought us some raw provisions. The other neighbors saw her doing this and they started bringing things too. Amma refused to take anything, because they have families to feed as well, but they were insistent. It was odd to see them standing at their gates and waving at us as we drove away.

3:00 P.M. We have just heard the news about Ammachi and Appachi's house. It, too, has been destroyed. Ammachi and Appachi are all right, however, and they are going to drive to Kanthi Aunty's house. She lives in Colombo Seven, and so far that area has not been affected at all. Sena Uncle said that Ramanaygam Road looks as if someone has dropped a bomb on it. So many houses have been destroyed that from the top of the road you can see clear to the railway lines and the sea. When I heard this I thought about childhood spend-the-days and all the good times we had there. These thoughts made me cry. I couldn't cry for my own house, but it was easy to grieve for my grandparents' house.

6:00 P.M. Something awful has happened. Amma and Appa called us into the drawing room a few minutes ago. Everyone there was looking very serious. Sena Uncle has received an anonymous phone call. The caller knows that we are here. He called Sena Uncle a traitor for sheltering Tamils and said that he and other "patriots" were coming tonight to kill us and burn down Sena Uncle's house. Sena Uncle tried to dismiss the call, saying that it was probably some crank, yet, all the same, he looked very worried. My parents want him to take us to one of the refugee camps that have been set up for victims of the riots, but he and Chithra Aunty will not hear of it. So once again we have an escape plan. Sena Uncle's mother lives next door, and there is a door in the side-garden wall between the two houses. You can't really spot this door because it is hidden behind the dog kennel. If there is any

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trouble, we are to go over to his mother's house and she will hide us in the library, a room that is easy to miss unless you know the house well. Tonight we must sleep in our shoes again. I am tired of these escape plans. I'm tired of everything. I just want it all to end.

11:00 P.M. My hand shakes even though it's two hours since we had the scare.

We had just finished dinner when the doorbell rang. We looked at each other, not knowing what to do. Then Chithra Aunty signalled to Sena Uncle to go and see who was at the door. Appa told us to get our knapsacks. Sena Uncle came back and said that there was a group of men outside. The doorbell rang again. Chithra Aunty beckoned to us to follow her, and we went out into the side garden. Bindi, the dog, started to whine when he saw Chithra Aunty. She held out her hand so that he could lick it. While she was doing this, we went through the door into Sena Uncle's mother's garden. As we closed the door, I heard Chithra Aunty and their son, Sanath, dragging the dog kennel in front of the door.

We had been in the library an hour when Sena Uncle came to fetch us. The men had gone away, he told us. He had spoken to them through the window. They said that they were collecting funds for a sports meet, and he gave them a hundred rupees.

It is obvious that something odd is going on, but what it is we don't know. Sena Uncle thinks that the phone call was made by the same men and that they have no intention of burning the house, it's simply a way of extorting money. Even though this is awful, I hope he is right. Appa and Amma are adamant that we must go to a refugee camp tomorrow, but Sena Uncle and Chithra Aunty refuse to even consider it.

JULY 27, 7:00 P.M. Curfew was lifted for a few hours so people could buy food. Yet there was nothing to buy. A lot of the grocery stores are owned by Tamils, and they have all been destroyed.

We had an unending stream of visitors today. Despite the phones being dead yesterday, news seems to have got around about what happened to us. Although I am grateful that so many people care about us, at the same time I wish they wouldn't come. They only bring dismal and depressing news with them.

Only one visit brought me pleasure, for this afternoon Shehan came to see me. I had not seen him since the riots began. A whole cycle of life seems to have passed since the last time we met and lay on his bed, talking about what subjects we would take if we passed our O levels next year. When I saw Shehan standing at Chithra Aunty's door, the reality of all that had happened hit me. Then I wanted more than anything else to hold him. But my family and some visitors

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were in the drawing room, so I shook his hand instead and asked him to follow me into the side garden, where we could be alone. Diggy, who was also in the drawing room, looked as if he was about to follow us, but Amma called out to him to leave us alone. This surprised me, because it was the first time that Amma had shown she was aware of Diggy's hostility towards Shehan whenever he visited me. Maybe, in the seven months I have known Shehan, Amma has come to accept him as a friend of mine.

When we were in the garden, Shehan told me he had gone to our house looking for me and was horrified when he saw the burnt remains. A neighbor had informed him about what had happened and where we were. I nodded, not really wanting to talk about it. Shehan must have sensed this, because he immediately began to tell me about a film that he wanted to see and how we could go for an afternoon matinee after school next week, if curfew is lifted. He was trying to cheer me up, and as I listened to him talk, something occurred to me that I had never really been conscious of before—Shehan was Sinhalese and I was not. This awareness did not change my feelings for him, it was simply there, like a thin translucent screen through which I watched him.

The phones are working again, and Lakshman Uncle called from Canada to find out how we were. He got the number from Kanthi Aunty, and he said that he had been trying to get through since Monday. Canadians have been watching the riots on TV, and they seem to know more about it than we do. It seems that there are demonstrations in Canada and England and India against the Sri Lankan government. When Appa had finished the telephone call, he was silent for a moment. Then he told Amma that Lakshman Uncle wanted us to come over to Canada as refugees, that this would be a good time to claim refugee status. I felt joyful at the thought of getting out of this country, and I could see hope in Diggy's and Sonali's faces too.

"Should we do it?" Amma asked.

Appa looked very thoughtful. "Let's watch the situation for a little longer and then decide," he said. "I have so many assets here. I don't want to just up and go like that."

Later, however, I heard Appa telling Amma that as soon as things quietened down, they would apply for passports for Diggy, Sonali, and me.

July 28, 8:00 P.M. This day has been a terrible one for Appa. We heard that the hotel was attacked yesterday. It was severely damaged and most of the rooms were burned. Fortunately there were no tourists there at the time; they had all been removed to the airport. Mr. Samarakoon and some of the staff tried to stop the mob, but it was useless. After he heard the news, Appa sat in the front garden, staring ahead of him. Amma went out to see if he was all right, and he said that he wanted to be left alone for a little while.

Appa finally came inside to hear the president address the nation. When the broadcast was over, he said that he wished he had stayed outside. The president expressed no sympathy for what we Tamils have suffered, nor did he condemn the actions of the thugs.

After the president's address, Appa went into the garden again and Amma followed him. I sat on the steps that led out from the French windows into the garden and listened to them. They were silent for a while. Then Appa said, "It is very clear that we no longer belong in this country."

Amma nodded.

"How could I have been so blind? Why didn't I see this coming? Now that I look back, it was obvious this was going to happen. I should have seen it, I should have known things would come to this."

"Don't blame yourself," Amma said. "It's difficult to see clearly when you're in the middle of something."

Appa shook his head. "But you saw it. You even warned me, but I refused to believe you." He turned to her. "How were you able to see it?"

Amma did not answer.

"When this is all over, we'll start to make plans for Canada."

I am glad he said that, because I long to be out of this country. I don't feel at home in Sri Lanka any longer, will never feel safe again.

July 29, 10:00 A.M. The morning has hardly begun and already the visitors have started to

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arrive. How many times must we repeat the same story? The excitement of the riots is wearing off, and what happened to us has become dull from being told so many times. Ammachi and Appachi are the latest visitors. They say they have come to see how we are, but all Ammachi has done since she got here is moan about the loss of their house. Finally I got up and went away to write in this journal.

The reality of losing our house is slowly beginning to sink in, but what I feel is nothing like what I imagined. I expected to be sad and nostalgic for a part of my life that is now destroyed. But I only get irritated and lethargic. It's the little things, the comforts and luxuries, that I miss. The yearning for things like my records or my books or even the mat by my bed gnaws at me until I think I must have them this moment or I will die. Then I become angry and frustrated, because I can't have them. I am also beginning to feel claustrophobic, because with so many people in the house it is impossible to have any peace and quiet. I long to be with Shehan, and I am thinking of slipping out this afternoon to see him.

The loss of our house is also beginning to hit Amma. She has cried a lot this morning. She tries not to let us see her crying and goes to the bathroom. Still, we know what she is doing in there and that makes us feel terrible.

1:00 P.M. The riots have begun again. Just when we thought everything was going back to normal. We heard people running down our road, shouting that the Tigers had landed in Colombo, that they had come to avenge the Tamil people.

A few minutes ago the radio denied that the Tigers have landed in Colombo. So how did this story start? Was it merely a rumor to cause more trouble?

Appa has just finished talking to Kanthi Aunty on the phone again. Ammachi and Appachi left forty-five minutes ago in their car and they still haven't arrived at Kanthi Aunty's house. Where can they be? Neliya Aunty is praying in the drawing room with Amma. I should be praying too, but I can't. All I can do is write in this book.

Sena Uncle has gone looking for them.

The situation must be serious, because the government has declared curfew again.

AUGUST 2. So many things have happened over the last four days, I have not felt like writing until now.

Not long after my last entry, Sena Uncle returned. I was in Sanath's room and the door was open. From the silence in the drawing room, I knew what had happened. Then I heard Amma begin to weep, a long cry of despair. I just stood where I was, not knowing what to do. I couldn't bear to go into the drawing room and see Amma crying.

At first Sena Uncle didn't want to say anything but Appa pressed him until he finally told them what had happened. He had set out for Kanthi Aunty's house, following the route Ammachi and Appachi had likely taken. Shortly after he left, however, he noticed a crowd up ahead on the road and smoke rising into the air. The traffic in front of him was too congested and, fearing the worst, he had got out of his car and hurried along the pavement. But he got there too late. The mob had set the car on fire with Ammachi and Appachi inside it.

Appa was silent for a while, then he said, "I must go. I have to see what happened." His voice was strange. "No," Amma said in a panicked voice. "You can't go. It's too dangerous." Now Appa began to shout, "It's my parents, for God's sake. It's my parents who are being burnt." Sena Uncle tried to calm him down but he wouldn't listen. Finally Amma yelled at him, "You have children to think of. If anything happens to you, what will become of them?" Appa became silent.

I knew that I couldn't stay in Sanath's room anymore. It wasn't right. I had to go into the drawing room and join them. My hands were sweating as I went towards the door. Everybody stared at me as I entered the drawing room, but I avoided looking at any of them. Amma turned to Sena Uncle. "What shall we do now?" she asked.

"We'll have to wait until the ambulance comes and takes the bodies away," he replied. "Until then, I'll go and keep watch over the car. Someone has to look out for"—he moved uncomfortably in his chair—"stray dogs and crows."

Chithra Aunty shuddered when he said this. I looked around me now. Appa sat in a chair, his

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legs sprawled out. He stared at the floor and his jaw muscles tightened every now and then. Amma had smudges on her face. The knot on the back of her neck had come partially undone and a strand of hair hung down.

After Sena Uncle left, we all remained as we were, not knowing what to do. Finally Amma moved in her chair and said, "We should inform the rest of the family." Yet nobody made an attempt to get up and go to the phone.

Yesterday, we buried Ammachi and Appachi. It was a bright, sunny day, so different from what a funeral day should be like. Radha Aunty flew back from America for the funeral. It was peculiar to see her standing near the coffin during the service, her head thrown back in the way Ammachi used to do when she was upset about something and didn't want anybody to see it. We no longer have much to say to each other, but, as we followed the coffins towards the grave, she put her hand on my shoulder and kept it there.

The whole funeral had an unreal feeling to it. Even while they were lowering the coffins into the grave, I found it hard to believe that it was Ammachi and Appachi we were burying. I think that the other aunts and uncles felt the same way, for nobody cried at the funeral. We simply stood around the grave, watching the coffins disappear under the clods of earth that were thrown on them.

I find it impossible to imagine that the world will ever be normal again.

August 25. Today I received my passport. As I looked at it, I finally realized that we are really leaving Sri Lanka; that in two days we will be in a strange country. I thought about how, when we were young, Diggy, Sonali, and I would sometimes imagine what foreign countries were like. All those Famous Five books, and then the Little Women and the Hardy Boys. We would often discuss what fun it would be to go abroad, make snowmen, have snowball fights, and eat scones and blueberry jam. I don't think that we ever imagined we would go abroad under these circumstances, as penniless refugees. We are going, not with the idea that something delightful awaits us, but rather with the knowledge that great difficulties lie ahead. First, Appa won't be coming for a while. He has to settle many things over here. The thought of not having Appa around is frightening. Amma didn't want to go without him, but he said that it was too dangerous for us to stay here, because we don't know when the next riot will break out. Second, we will have to live with Lakshman Uncle. This news makes me want to stay behind. It is bad enough living off Chithra Aunty and Sena Uncle, whom we know so well. But to be in a foreign country, living off the charity of somebody I hardly know, is terrible. Appa can't take his money out of the country because of government regulations. We are only allowed five hundred pounds each. The thought of being this poor scares me.

Today I watched a beggar woman running from car to car at the traffic lights, her hand held out, and I wondered if this would be our plight in Canada.

August 27. I have just returned from seeing Shehan. I can still smell his particular odor on my body, which always lingers on me after we make love. I remember the first time I noticed this. I had come home from being with him, and I was so nervous that others would detect it that, after putting my bicycle away at the back, I rushed to the shower. I smile to think about that, since now I am reluctant even to change my clothes for fear that I will lose this final memento.

When we made love for the last time today, it was nothing like I imagined it would be—almost passionless, uncoordinated and tentative, lacking synchronization. Like those afternoons when neither of us felt ardent, but, thinking that the other did, we would make our best effort. I had dreaded our parting so much that, for fear of the pain, I had withdrawn from him. I suppose he had done the same thing.

Afterwards, while we were putting on our clothes, I glanced up at the mirror and saw that he was watching me. For a moment our eyes met, then I turned away and continued getting dressed.

When I left his house, the sky had darkened and I could feel the moisture in the air. I had borrowed Sanath's bicycle for the afternoon, and as I cycled along Galle Road towards Sena Uncle's house, I had the nagging sense that there was something I needed to do but I couldn't remember what. When I passed Bullers Road, I

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knew what it was. I stopped my bicycle and wheeled it back along the pavement.

By the time I had turned onto our road, I could already feel a few drops of rain on my arms. The road was deserted. From the top of it, I could see our house, its black walls and beams visible above the other houses. When I reached it, I pushed open the gate. Something was different from the last time I was there. The house looked even more bare, even more desolate than before. Then I realized what had happened, and I stared at our house in shock. Everything that was not burned had been stolen. Whatever had remained intact, furniture, uncharred beams, doors, windows, even the hinges and the rain pipes, had been taken. How naked the house appeared without its door and windows, how hollow and barren with only scraps of paper and other debris in its rooms. I felt hot, angry tears begin to well up in me as I saw this final violation. Then, for the first time, I began to cry for our house. I sat on the verandah steps and wept for the loss of my home, for the loss of everything that I held to be precious. I tried to muffle the sound of my weeping, but my voice cried out loudly as if it were the only weapon I had against those who had destroyed my life.

Finally I could not cry any more. I leaned back on one of the verandah posts, exhausted, and stared out at the garden. It looked so forlorn. The grass had grown, but in uneven patches, and the roses had lost most of their petals. The araliya tree was bare of its flowers. They, too, must have been stolen. I was struck then by a bitter irony. These araliya flowers would probably be offered to some god as a pooja by the very people who had plucked them, in order to increase their chances of a better life in the next birth.

I could hear the thunder in the skies now, and in the dust on the driveway I could see the speckled pattern of raindrops. It was time for me to leave. I got up slowly and brushed the dirt from my trousers, then I went down the steps and picked up my bicycle. I wheeled it to the gate, staring straight ahead, not wanting to look at the house again. I didn't bother to close the gate as I left. There was no reason to protect it against the outside world anymore.

I began to ride up the road, and the rain suddenly started, falling in great torrents, as it does during the monsoon season. When I reached the top of the road, I couldn't prevent myself from turning back to look at the house one last time. For a moment I saw it, then the rain fell faster and thicker, obscuring it from my sight. □

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The Last Page

We live in an ever-widening circle of genocides, achieved and attempted, perpetrated in the present and discovered in the past. But we see and care about few of them. Such selective perception is, I believe, encouraged by the often-repeated claim that the Holocaust is unique.*

Those who say this do so for several reasons. Some see it as the way to protect remembrance. Only by refusing comparison with a potentially infinite catalogue of atrocities can the memory of the mass extermination of the Jews be kept vivid. Some see this in religious terms. Only by keeping the memory *sacred*—unprofaned by comparison—can one preserve reverence for the victims and horror at an evil whose dimensions, methods, and goals were utterly un-banal. Some resist the "normalization" of the Holocaust that places it, say, in the context of Hitler's antibolshevism or of Germany's rapid industrialization, arguing that this implies exculpation and even justification. Some resist "devictimization": they fear losing the moral authority that comes from a heritage of suffering. Some even see the Holocaust as an unconditional source of legitimation for Israel's past and future policies, and an advance payment for future injustices.

Denying uniqueness also stems from a variety of sources. Some reach for comparisons. To place the Holocaust outside history, they say, is to declare it unthinkable and inexplicable. What makes it distinctive can only emerge from analytical comparisons with other cases of mass enslavement and extermination. Others are directly concerned with such cases. The claim to uniqueness, they maintain, can only serve to devalue and even render invisible the Gypsy genocide, the Turks' destruction of the Armenians, the elimination of the native peoples of the Americas, not to mention the Atlantic slave trade or the Stalinist Terror. Yet others, of course, have their own reasons for seeking to devalue or render invisible the Holocaust itself. For some, to deny its uniqueness can be a version of "revisionist" denial. It is a sign of the passions this debate engenders that some advocates of uniqueness assume that all those who deny it are denying not the uniqueness of the Holocaust but its very existence.

In which respects does the historical evidence support the uniqueness of the Judeocide? Was it the quantifiable scale—the proportion of populations destroyed or numbers actually killed or rate of destruction? Was it the methods used, administrative and technical? Was it the dehumanization, the use of language, expelling the Nazis' victims from the human race? Was it the intentionality of total annihilation of a people? Or the near-success in achieving it? Or does uniqueness lie in the religious dimension? Did the anti-Christian Nazi state prosecute a holy war against the witness-people accused of deicide on behalf of European Christendom?

Exploring such questions need not diminish our sense of, or our sensitivity to, what we have come to call the "Holocaust." Nor need answering them negatively have this consequence. They enable consideration of forgotten, unacknowledged, and suppressed genocides within our history and across the world, from the massacre of the Albigensians to that in East Timor. Consider the Gypsy genocide, comparable to that of the Jews, but almost entirely lost to history and our collective memory. Moreover, by comparing the horrors of this century with its ultimate horror we make it harder to avoid the crucial question of complicity: of the inaction of the misnamed "world community" in the face of preventable mass atrocities such as have occurred before its eyes in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia.

—STEVEN LUKES □

* See *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, edited with an introduction by Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).

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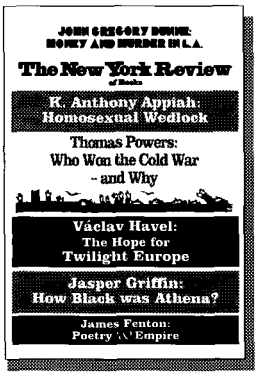

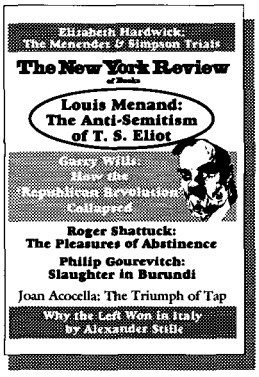

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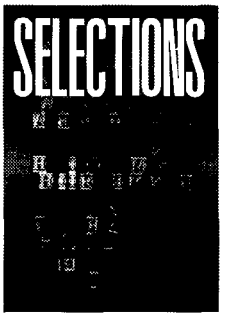

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